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IN SIREN TOILS

-:- Or, -:-

Wiles That Wrecked

By Emma Howard Wight

CHAPTER I.

AN ALMOST overpowering odor of roses greeted Adrian Cather as he entered the beautiful gold-and-green drawing-room of the Countess de Duphany. There were roses everywhere, yellow and red and pink and white. The Countess de Duphany was passionately fond of roses and always had them about her. The exquisite red roses that Adrian had sent her that morning filled a great Etruscan bowl on a mother-of-pearl table. He stopped a moment looking down upon them, the suggestion of a dreamy smile about his lips. Their color and their perfume reminded him of the lips of the woman to whom he had sent them. Six months before, Adrian Cather, a rich young American, had made the acquaintance in Paris of the Countess de Duphany, a widow with one child, a little girl. She was very beautiful, fascinating and attractive, and Adrian, attracted by her from the first, speedily fell madly in love with her. It had been his intention to make quite a tour of Europe, but his mad passion for the Countess de Duphany held him in Paris.

Young Cather had letters of introduction to some of the best people in Paris, among them Baron von Rudolph, at that time German ambassador. The latter

took a fancy to the young American. Adrian became a frequent and welcome visitor to the home of the ambassador, who had one daughter, Elsie, 19 years of age.

Adrian was tall and slender and refined-looking, with dark brown hair and blue-gray eyes. His face was rather grave in expression and his rare smile attractive.

"Monsieur!"

Adrian turned to find Marie, the Countess de Duphany's little daughter, standing beside him. He held out his hand to her.

"Good evening, my little sweetheart," he said.

The child went up to him, holding up her flower-like little face for him to kiss her. She was very fond of the young American. Adrian sat down and lifted her upon his knee. She was a fairylike little creature, pale and fair, with a cloud of pale gold hair, silky and soft like floss silk and with a silvery sheen.

"I've been wishing you'd come today," she said, looking up into his face with a pair of beautiful, dark-lashed, blue eyes. "It has been three days since you came to see us."

"Three days!" Adrian smiled as he toyed with her wonderful hair. "To me, Marie, that has seemed a very long time."

She nodded, her fair, little face very grave, her blue eyes wistful.

"I missed you very much," she declared. "I asked mamma why you stayed away so long. She said you would soon be coming again."

Again the faint, grave smile passed over Adrian Cather's lips. He was thinking how futile had been his efforts to remain away from the Countess de Duphany. He had made the attempt, had determined to leave Paris; then on the night before his departure he had gone to the opera and there he had seen the Countess de Duphany. The spell of her beauty again enchained him, he weakened, succumbed, and the next day found him at her apartments awaiting her coming with a rapidly beating heart, with a feeling that was half joyous expectancy and half pain.

He had grown quite calm, however, as he sat with little Marie, of whom he was very fond, on his knee.

"Do you love me, Marie?" he asked.

She slipped her pearly bare arms about his neck.

"Yes, I love you," she replied, promptly. "I wish you would live here with us all the time."

Adrian flushed and laughed oddly. "Perhaps you would grow tired of me, then," he suggested.

She shook her head vehemently. "No, no, I could never grow tired of you," she declared. She smoothed his cheek caressingly with her little white hand. "You're the dearest man I know, and I would like to have you always." Her flower face flushed, her blue eyes lighted. "Oh, I'd be happy, happy!"

Adrian kissed her, then was silent for a few moments. The child's innocent, affectionate words had in them a disturbing element. He took from his pocket a small blue satin jewel case which he opened, disclosing a slender gold chain to which was attached a heart-shaped locket with a pearl in the center encircled with diamonds.

"Look, Marie," he said.

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed the child.

"It is for you," said Adrian.

Her delicate face flushed pink with delight.

"For me?" she whispered.

Adrian clasped the chain about her fair, little throat.

"It looks very nice," he declared.

"I like it because it is beautiful," said Marie. "But I love it and shall keep it all my life because you gave it to me."

She was looking up at Adrian with innocent, loving eyes, but he was gazing past her at the Countess de Duphany, who had come into the room. He put the child gently from him and arose. The Countess de Duphany gave him her hand as he came to meet her, a wonderful hand, white, with long slim fingers glittering with diamonds.

"Ah, monsieur, I thought you had deserted us," she murmured.

He bowed low over her hand in silence. The child had slipped quietly out of the room. Countess de Duphany sank down upon a couch. She was a dazzlingly fair, auburn-haired woman, with a voluptuous figure. Her eyes were a golden brown, her lips full and vividly crimson. She motioned for Adrian to sit beside her.

"Tell me why you stayed away?" she asked softly.

"I had made up my mind to leave Paris," he replied.

Stephanie, Countess de Duphany, lifted her beautiful dark brows.

"Why?" she queried.

"Because I love you, love you to madness," answered Adrian.

"And yet you were going away?"

"Yes, because it is torture for me to remain near you, believing my love hopeless," he replied gloomily.

There was a pause, then the Countess de Duphany asked in a half whisper:

"Why are you so sure it is—hopeless?"

Adrian's breath caught in his throat. He could not speak for a moment.

"Do you mean you—care?" he murmured hoarsely.

"Yes."

To Adrian the room seemed to whirl for a moment. His breath came laboredly.

"God!" he whispered, then caught her to him and spent his soul in a kiss on her lips. To him it seemed the most wonderful thing in the world that she should care.

"I love you! I love you!" he cried. "When will you marry me, Stephanie?"

She drew away from him, smiling.

"Oh, I do not know! I haven't thought about that," she replied. "Are you not content to know that I—care?" and she looked at him in a way that sent the blood racing thru his veins.

Again he clasped her to him, murmuring inarticulate words of love and passion. She was ardent, responsive. Her charm, her beauty, her seductiveness intoxicated him. After a time, she very resolutely drew away from him.

"Of course, you're going to the ball at the German embassy on the 12th?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Adrian. "You will be there?" he queried with eagerness.

"I think so." She spoke thoughtfully. "You are quite a frequent visitor at Baron von Rudolph's?" she added.

"Oh, yes," replied Adrian. "Baron von Rudolph has been very kind to me ever since I have been in Paris."

"Have you heard anything at the German embassy in regard to the war rumors?" asked the Countess de Duphany. Tho she spoke with apparent carelessness, she waited with suppressed eagerness for his reply.

"No, I have never heard a word there bearing upon the subject," replied Adrian.

He spoke abstractedly, his mind absorbed by the wonderful happiness that had come to him. He had worshiped at the shrine of the beautiful French woman with a great many others, but had never had any reason to believe that she cared for him. To find that she did was a revelation that changed the world for him.

"I have good reason for believing that the Baron von Rudolph has received from diplomatic quarters information bearing directly on the war question," said the Countess de Duphany.

"Indeed?" murmured Adrian, vaguely. He was thinking how exquisitely her rich hair contrasted with the cream-white of her perfect skin.

"I am very curious in regard to that information," added the Countess de Duphany. She turned toward Adrian. "Perhaps you could obtain it for me."

Adrian shook his head with a smile.

"It isn't at all likely that Baron von Rudolph would mention such things to me," he said.

"Perhaps not," admitted the Countess de Duphany. "But I understand that his daughter is in his confidence, knows all his official business and—secrets." She paused a moment, then added, looking at him with a smile, "You might obtain the information from—her."

Adrian sat up and stared at her in astonishment.

"What?" he exclaimed.

She proceeded to explain.

CHAPTER II.

ABOUT an hour later, the Prince Loris Ivanovitch, a magnificent-looking man of splendid physique, with eyes the color of blue steel and a curling yellow beard, came into the rose-and-silver boudoir of the Countess de Duphany. She soon joined him, very lovely in a negligee of maize silk and cream lace.

She went swiftly to him, her gold-brown eyes tender, passionate. He swept her into his arms, his lips seeking and clinging to hers. Her arms went about his neck, she clung to him a few moments, then disengaged herself and sank down into a chair.

"Sit down, Loris; I have something to tell you," she said.

He sat down opposite to her.

"Adrian Cather was here this afternoon," she began.

Prince Loris slightly lifted his brows.

"I had an idea he was trying to break his bonds," he observed.

She laughed a little. "That is true. He had made up his mind to leave Paris. But," she gave a half-contemptuous shrug of her lovely shoulders, "he failed to carry out his resolution."

Prince Loris glanced at her somewhat curiously.

"What do you intend doing with that crude young American?" he asked. "He's mad about you, but that's such an old story, I would not think you would find it particularly amusing."

"I do not find it amusing," she replied. "But I think I may find it useful. I may be able to turn it to account." As he gave her a quick, questioning glance, she added, significantly, "He is quite intimate at the German embassy."

"Ah!" murmured Prince Loris, a quick look of comprehension flashing across his face. He thought an instant, then shook his head. "I doubt his being able to turn that fact to account," he declared.

She gave a low laugh.

"You do? Listen." She leaned toward him, lowering her voice. "Baron von Rudolph is in possession of certain information that would be of great value to us—to France. Adrian Cather will obtain that information for—me."

Prince Loris shook his head incredulously.

"I am afraid you are oversanguine," he told her. "Your young American will never be able to obtain from Baron von Rudolph secret and official information."

"I believe that to be true," admitted the Countess de Duphany, quietly. "Adrian Cather will obtain his information from Elsie von Rudolph, the ambassador's daughter," she continued confidently. "She is deeply in love with the young American. There is no doubt of that. So it will be comparatively easy for him to get from her what he wishes to know."

"Perhaps so," murmured Prince Loris, thoughtfully. "But is he willing to make the attempt?"

"At first he was not," replied the Countess de Duphany. "He was shocked when I suggested it. But in the end he consented."

Prince Loris smiled grimly. "He naturally would—if you offered sufficient inducement."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"He thinks I love him and will marry him."

"Poor deluded fool!" ejaculated Prince Loris. He studied her. "What will you do when you have no further use for him? How will you rid yourself of him?"

Her vivid lips parted over her small white teeth in a smile that was cruel.

"Oh, I shall find a way," she replied. "Perhaps Elsie von Rudolph will console him."

Prince Loris regarded her a moment thru half-closed lids, then he laughed softly.

"A man who has loved you, wanted you, is not apt to be easily consoled. He'll eat out his heart in bitterness." He arose, went to her, and caught her roughly to him. "You were made to drive men mad!" he whispered, hoarsely.

"I love you!" she panted.

Later, as Prince Loris arose to depart, Marie came into the room in search of her mother. She stopped abruptly at the sight of Prince Loris, her childish brows contracting. He held out his hand to her, as Adrian had done, but she did not move.

"Come, give me a kiss, pretty one," he said.

She shrank back, shaking her head.

"You won't kiss me?"

"No, monsieur."

"Why?"

"I only kiss people I like very much," she replied gravely.

"And you do not like me?"

"No, monsieur."

"Why, Marie!" exclaimed the Countess de Duphany, half-amusedly, half-reprovingly.

Marie looked calmly at her mother. "He asked me, mamma. I could not tell a story."

"Oh, I shall bring Marie the biggest and handsomest doll to be found in Paris, and then she will kiss me and love me, too," declared Prince Loris.

The child's flowery face flushed deeply.

"I do not want the doll, monsieur," she said, with quaint dignity.

The Countess de Duphany laughed.

"Marie's kisses and love are not to be bought," she said. She turned to the little girl. "Are they, darling?"

Marie went to her mother, nestling against her. The Countess de Duphany caught the glitter of diamonds at her baby throat and leaned forward to examine the chain and locket.

"Why, where did you get that chain and pendant, child?" she asked curiously.

"Monsieur Adrian Cather gave them to me," replied Marie.

Prince Loris Ivanovitch gave a short laugh.

"La petite Marie prefers diamonds to dolls, perhaps," he said. "Did you kiss him for that pretty bauble?"

"I kissed him because I love him," replied the child.

Prince Loris looked at her oddly, while his long, white fingers toyed with his curling yellow beard. The pale beauty of the small, exquisite face, with its lovely, dark-lashed blue eyes and little flower-red mouth, appealed to him strangely. He felt a brutal inclination to crush the dainty little creature in his arms and cover her face with kisses that would hurt and bruise. There was something in the look he bent upon her that caused the child to shrink closer to her mother.

Prince Loris turned to go out. A long sigh of relief left the child's lips. She was trembling.

"What is the matter, darling?" asked the Countess de Duphany. Marie's lips quivered. "You must not mind Prince Loris, dear. He was only teasing you. So Monsieur Cather gave you that chain and locket?"

"Yes. The child's face brightened and she smiled.

The Countess de Duphany, gazing straight before her with somber eyes and contracted brows, was silent.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was a grave look on Baron von Rudolph's face as he sat at his desk in the library of the German embassy, his eyes bent upon a document spread out before him. He was a dark, heavily built man, with a bearing of quiet but impressive dignity. After a little while he pushed the document aside, sighed and rested his head on his hand. He fell into deep thought.

"Father!"

He started and looked up. A slender, brown-eyed, brown-haired girl, with a fresh complexion, was standing beside him. The ambassador's daughter was not exactly pretty, but she was very sweet and attractive-looking.

"Is that you, my dear?" exclaimed Baron von Rudolph, his fine dark eyes softening as he looked at the girl. She was regarding him a little solicitously. "I did not hear you come in."

"No, you were too absorbed in thought," declared Elsie, with a half smile. "And you look troubled, father. What is wrong?"

She seated herself upon the arm of his chair, slipping her arm about his neck. For some moments he did not speak.

"Yes, Elsie, I am troubled," he said at length. "I fear that our country is going to war."

A pained expression broke from the girl's lips. "Oh, I hope not," she exclaimed. She gave him an anxious, questioning glance. "Father, you have heard something?"

"Yes."

He leaned forward, took the document he had been studying from the desk and handed it to her silently. As she read it, the fresh color on her cheeks faded a little.

"Is this generally known?" she asked, as she laid the document back on the desk.

He shook his head. "No, it is secret official information" He smiled a little grimly. "There are certain high officials here in Paris who could make good use of that information. It would be of great value to them. I did not think it wise even to let my secretary know about it. He might be approached and offered a large amount of money, and 'tis said, 'Every man has his price.'"

The door opened, a footman entered and addressed Elsie.

"Monsieur Adrian Cather is in the drawing-room, mademoiselle," he announced.

The color deepened perceptibly on the girl's cheek. "I will come presently," she said.

As the footman left the room Baron von Rudolph glanced at his daughter in a half-questioning, half-troubled way. The troubled look had vanished from her face, her brown eyes were shining with a happy light, a dreamy smile touched her lips.

"Don't worry, father," she said, stooping to kiss him. "There may be no war, after all."

The ambassador smiled gravely. He had forgotten in a graver anxiety his apprehensions of war. Something dearer to him than even his country was threatened—the happiness of his only child. After she had gone out he sat for a while thinking, then he locked the official document in a drawer in his desk, arose, crossed the room and opened a door leading into a study. A young man, seated at a desk, looked up and then arose. Baron von Rudolph, motioning for him to resume his seat, came and stood beside the desk.

"Did you obtain the information I desired in regard to the young American, Monsieur Cather, Paulsen?" he asked.

Gerhard Paulsen, secretary to the ambassador, a tall, fair, young German, bowed.

"Yes, sir," he replied. He paused, flushing a little.

"Well?" queried the ambassador.

"Adrian Cather is a frequent visitor at the home of the Countess de Du-

READ the highly interesting story in this issue, entitled, "IN SIREN TOILS; or, WILES THAT WRECKED," by Emma Howard Wight. It is warm and illuminating. Try it. Look out next week for William H. Manning's great election story, "MASTERFUL MORGAN; or, THE HOSTILE MOUNTAIN." It is strong and timely. Also, there is going to be a splendid new boys' story next week, entitled, "LONE SCOUT BOYS; or, FOR PREPAREDNESS," by St. George Rathborne. Watch for it, boys. It will tell you what a Tribe of Lone Scout boys did in getting preparedness for war.

phany," the secretary continued. "He is said to be desperately infatuated with her."

It was a moment before the ambassador spoke.

"And what of the Countess de Duphany? Is she favorably disposed toward Mr. Cather?"

"She encourages his attentions, but it is not generally believed that she intends to marry him. The Russian prince, Loris Ivanovitch, is said to be her lover."

Baron von Rudolph looked very grave, almost angry.

Is Adrian Cather aware of what is said in regard to the Countess de Duphany and the Prince?"

The secretary looked up at Baron von Rudolph.

"No," he replied confidently. "I am convinced he has no suspicion of any such relation between the Countess de Duphany and the Prince Loris Ivanovitch."

The ambassador nodded, turned and walked toward the window.

"That is all, I believe, Paulsen."

The secretary sat for a while in a thought after the door von Rudolph had left the room. He had been instructed to make certain inquiries in regard to rumors that were afloat on the young American, and he knew the confirmation of those rumors had proved a blow to Baron von Rudolph.

Gerhard Paulsen sighed deeply. He loved Elsie von Rudolph. But tho he was of a very good family, he was too poor to aspire to her hand. He knew that the girl loved Adrian Cather, but he felt no elation over the probability that nothing would ever come of it. He loved her and he wanted her to be happy.

In the library Baron von Rudolph walked restlessly up and down the floor, troubled and perplexed, trying to determine whether or not he should tell his daughter of Adrian Cather's infatuation for the Countess de Duphany.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Elsie entered one of the reception-rooms, Adrian came forward to meet her, a little pale. There was a constraint in his manner which she noticed vaguely, and him almost instantly forgot in the joy of seeing him. Adrian hated himself for the part he was going to play. He adored Elsie von Rudolph and had a sincere regard for her—but it never once occurred to him to hesitate to do the bidding of the woman who so utterly enthralled him. He knew that Elsie von Rudolph loved him, and he must use that love to accomplish his purpose.

When he left the German embassy a little later he was in possession of the information desired by the Countess de Duphany. But for the time he felt no elation, only a disgust for himself and an overwhelming sense of shame. Elsie von Rudolph had confided to him what he desired to know after he had given her the impression that he loved her. He had also given her every reason to believe that he intended asking her to become his wife. The rest had been easy. A little adroit questioning had drawn from the girl all he wished to know. She loved and trusted him, and it seemed only natural to her to confide in him. And he was about to betray both her love and her confidence.

He was ashamed, remorseful, but it never occurred to him to hold sacred what the girl had told him. He was too madly in love with the Countess de Duphany. He went from the German embassy directly to her apartments. And when she came into the room, exquisitely lovely in a house gown of amber crepe, he forgot the despicable part he had played, forgot everything but her impelling beauty, her seductive charm.

As she moved slowly toward him with the voluous grace of a panther, her eyes, thru narrowed lids, dwelt questioningly upon his face. He caught her in his arms, kissing her passionately upon her lips, her throat. She yielded for a few moments, then drew herself away and stood looking at him.

"Have you good...news for me?" she asked smilingly.

"Yes." He saw her breath quicken. "I have obtained the information you desired."

"Ah!" She stood for a moment motionless, her eyes filled with a strange exultation, then she sat down upon a couch and motioned for Adrian to sit beside her. "Now, tell me," she half whispered.

In a low tone he told her what he had learned from Elsie von Rudolph. She sat perfectly still, listening, but he could see that she was alive with excitement. Her eyes were lowered, and the color rose in her face, burning hotly in the wonderful dusk "olive" of her cheeks.

"It means—war," she murmured, half to herself, when he had finished.

"Does it?" said Adrian, abstractedly, his eyes devouring the beauty of her face, the grace of her long slim body. He put his arms about her, whispering, passionately, "Stephanie, when will you marry me?"

She gave a low laugh.

"Oh, I do not know," she replied. "You must give me time to think about it."

"Don't keep me waiting long," he pleaded. "I want you! Want you!" She was silent, her face turned from him to hide the mocking light in her wonderful golden brown eyes. It was never so glad before that I am rich," he continued. "You shall never know, my beloved, what it means to have a wish unratified."

He lifted her long, slim, white hand, glittering with diamonds, to his lips. "I have ordered a ring for you, a circlet of the most perfect diamonds that can be found. It will take some little time to procure the perfect stones I want."

She hardly heard him, she was listening to the striking of a clock on the mantel. As the last stroke died away, she arose.

"I must send you away now," she said. "I have an engagement."

Adrian left the apartments of the Countess de Duphany, his head in a whirl. He was intoxicated with happiness. The thought of the unmanly and dishonorable act he had played no longer had power to trouble him. Manhood, honor, conscience were lost in his passion for the Countess de Duphany. Nothing else mattered.

He turned in at his club, dropped upon a couch in the lounge-room and ordered a liqueur. The lounge-room was empty save for himself and two young Frenchmen seated near him. One was the Vicomte Rigaud and the other a writer, Gustave de Merioncourt. Adrian was slightly acquainted with both of them, but feeling no desire to enter into conversation, he took a magazine from a table and sat with it open before him, not reading, but wrapped in blissful thoughts.

Suddenly his attention was attracted to the two men by hearing the name of the Countess de Duphany, and he became alert, listening. One was evidently discussing her in a light manner that sent the blood racing hot thru Adrian's veins.

"She's the most beautiful woman in Paris," declared De Meriloncourt, "but she's as cold as she's lovely."

The Vicomte Rigaud laughed.

"Cold? Stephanie de Duphany? Why, you've only to look at her to see she's made of fire. But she's concentrative; she permits herself but one lover."

The waiter entered and Adrian paid and tipped him mechanically and he went out. Then he sat rigidly listening.

"She has a lover?" queried De Meriloncourt.

"Yes."

"Who is that much-to-be-envied person?"

Adrian's breath came laboredly over his lips.

"Prince Loris Ivanovitch," replied Vicomte Rigaud.

The hot blood seemed suddenly to congeal in Adrian's veins. He arose with deadly calmness, took the liqueur from the table, and with the glass in his hand, crossed over to where the two men sat.

"Monsieur," he said, "I demand that you retract the statement you have just made involving the honor and good name of the Countess de Duphany."

The Vicomte Rigaud looked at Adrian and slightly lifted his brows.

"By what right, monsieur, do you make such a demand?" he asked quietly.

"The Countess de Duphany is my promised wife," replied Adrian.

The Vicomte Rigaud bowed courteously.

"In that case, monsieur, I regret that you should have overheard my remark," he said, "but I cannot retract it."

"Then, monsieur, I say that you are a liar," and as he spoke he threw the contents of the glass in the face of the Vicomte Rigaud.

The two Frenchmen leaped to their feet. The Vicomte started toward Adrian, then stood still, as his friend laid a restraining hand on his arm. He became suddenly very calm, but the pallor of his face and the drops of sweat on his brow showed with what an effort he controlled himself.

"You shall answer to me for this insult, monsieur," he said.

Adrian bowed.

"I am at your service, monsieur."

He bowed again, turned and passed out of the club.

That night a friend of the Vicomte Rigaud waited upon Adrian with a formal challenge. The meeting was to take place on the following morning at sunrise, and the choice of weapons was left to Adrian.

"It is only fair to inform you, monsieur," said the Frenchman, "that the Vicomte Rigaud is an expert swordsman."

Adrian smiled a little. "As I know nothing of swordsmanship, I choose pistols," he said.

Upon the following morning, as the sun was rising, Adrian and the Vicomte Rigaud met in a secluded spot on the outskirts of Paris. In the distance the turrets and spires and steeples flushed with rose-colored light, Paris looked like a dream city.

Adrian, outwardly as calm as the unperturbed Frenchman, was in reality mad at heart. Never before had life seemed to him so vividly colored, so full of blissful possibilities, of such radiant promise. And now that the Vicomte Rigaud was a much better shot than he. And he was to die, perhaps, with all of love's unexpressed delights yet untasted. His thoughts dwelt continually on the Countess de Duphany, and never had her rich beauty, more power to maddon him than now when he had reason to believe it would never be his. Never for one moment since he had insulted the Vicomte Rigaud at the club had his faith in her wavered. Women like Stephanie, Countess de Duphany, were a totally new experience to the young American.

The two men faced each other with deadly purpose in the rose glow of the rising sun. The Frenchman was cool, almost nonchalant, the American somewhat pale, with tense lips and grave, steady eyes.

This capital story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will pay you if you send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

"She said you would soon be coming again."

CURED.

"Never again as long as I live will I tell an untruth," declared Marjory, emphatically, throwing herself in a heap on the couch and burying her whitest of white lies. That's positive."

"And the reason for this beautiful resolution?" inquired her married sister, in whose house Marjory had taken refuge.

"It's not from any moral scruples that I have registered this vow," sighed Marjory, reveling in the wickedness of her confession, "but simply because I have come to the conclusion that lies don't pay."

"Tell me what happened when you forsook the truth," said the interested sister.

"This morning the thermometer read 101 degrees in the shade, and there wasn't any shade," related Marjory. "I had just returned home from a strenuous house party at Dorothy's bungalow, much the worse for wear. Simply exhausted and hating everybody. I flung the contents of my suitcase into their respective places, jumped into my kimono, pulled down the shades, locked my door, threw myself on the bed, and sighed a sigh of contentment.

"Then the telephone rang. Such a long, vicious ring, too. As I went out into the hall to answer it I said to myself: 'If that is King George, and if he asks me to go riding in an aeroplane with him, I shall refuse. I wouldn't accept an invitation even from Bob himself, today.'

"Yes, this is Marjory," I told the telephone. 'Oh, I'm dreadfully, dreadfully sorry, Puss, but I won't be home this afternoon. You were coming to spend the afternoon with me? What a shame that I can't be here! I am just going downtown this minute. I have some important shopping.' That is what I shamelessly told her.

"'Going downtown?' Puss said over the 'phone. 'How perfectly grand! You dear, sweet thing, I know you will match some Irish crochet lace for me. We have the dressmaker here. I'll bring the sample right over.'

"Then before I could say 'Peter Pepper' that awful girl had hung up the receiver.

"Mildred Morton Morse, maybe I wasn't angry! I was furious. Here was a whole afternoon spoiled by having to rush downtown in the broiling sun to match a sample of lace, for a girl whom I see only about twice a year, and whom I don't care two straws for!

"As there was no one to open the door for Puss and her sample, I had to dress in a perfect whirlwind rush—and I looked it, too. When I got downtown my hat was over one ear, my veil was over the other, my sailor collar had worked its front view to the rear, my white buckskin shoes begged for a shine, my gloves sympathized with the mistreated shoes, and my hair was done in a wad on the top of my head in a most original and unbecoming manner. The perspiration rolled in rivulets off my face. I looked hideous, that's all. My one and only fervent wish was that I might meet no one I knew.

"Well, as I stepped off the car I ran straight into Bob, Bob's mother, Bob's father, Bob's sister and Bob's grandmother. They were all coming from their Michigan home for some sort of family reunion or something. Bob has been so anxious for me to meet his family, and I wanted to make a good impression, so I looked—well, Bob is Bob, that's all.

"There I stood like a scarecrow. Bob looked at me wonderingly as he introduced me to his tribe. It seemed to me that there were hundreds of them. 'What a pleasure to be pleased to meet you, for we've heard so much about you,' I know they were thinking. What could I say to Bob's people in my awful garb?

"I said good-by as quickly as I could and started away, disgusted with Bob, his family, Puss, myself and the whole wide world in general. Hurrying to the department store I recovered that I had lost the miserable sample, so I couldn't get the lace. Then I jumped on the car, and here I am a wreck, with no time for any comfort you may have in stock.

"Please 'phone to Puss for me. Tell her that I didn't get the lace because I lost the sample, and that I am glad of it. Tell her that I didn't have any downtown shopping of my own to attend to. Tell her that if she had a molecule of sense she wouldn't want to inflict herself on innocent people in such hot weather. Tell her that if Bob breaks our engagement it will be on her conscience, and that I hate her anyway.

"The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth for me! I can see already that I'm going to be unpopular."

The White Idol's Trail

-:- Or, -:-

The Holy Ngah

By Hapsburg Liebe

Begun in No. 40, September 30. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news stands, agents or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER V.

"GIVE IT TO 'EM!"

A POINT near the crest of the eastern hill, the fugitives stopped and sat down for a moment's rest. They had easily outstripped their pursuers, thanks to the fact that the moon was not yet high enough to drive the darkness from the valley below, and they now had little fear of being soon overtaken.

Redding, boiling over with curiosity despite his anxiety concerning the fate of little Silverthorn, turned toward the Visayan, who had thrown aside his stolen robe and was garbed only in the scanty attire of the Karinundans.

"I want to know something of this," he said pointedly. "If I have a right to know everything about it, seeing that I risked my life to accommodate you."

The brown man turned quickly and replied:

"Ah, I cannot tell you all, but I can tell you a part of it. And do not ask me, senor, to tell you more than I choose to tell you. I trust that some day I may be at liberty to make everything clear to you. And please do not think me a senor, that I am revealing all that it is wise to reveal."

"The idol, the Holy Ngah, came to this terrible island two years ago. It came seated in the center of a pure white boat—with you and me, senor—from the temple—with no person whatever. The Karinundans regarded it with awe because of it, and I, also, as a set of, as a god to worship, also building for it the temple of bamboo and nipa and grasses. Tabao, the bandit, was the first convert to the new religion; it came easy for him, because he was an 'aswords' points with the faith of his father, who was a Moro. From the Moro tongue came the name 'pandita,' meaning 'teacher—but you understeriand that."

"Your part in the affair questioned Redding, as the Visayan paused uncertainly. "You are neither a Moro nor a Karinundan; you are a Visayan, and I gather that you have been much among civilized peoples; therefore you should know better than to risk your life for a mere heathen idol."

"My part is that I came here for the god Ngah—and I do not think I could leave the island without it; and yet it is but a labor of love," Pepe answered enigmatically, "I have been here," he continued, "more than a year, and today came the first opportunity to get my hands on the idol. More than this I cannot say, senor."

"Suppose I make you tell more?" Redding said quietly. "I am much the stronger man."

Pepe Malana eyed the big American hard.

"You would not mistreat me, senor," he breathed, appealing to the other's high sense of honor, "because I saved your life."

"You also got me into the mixup," retorted Redding.

"Senor, you would have been taken to the temple as a sacrifice anyway," replied Pepe. "They were watching for a chance to catch you off your guard. Besides, even if I did get you into the mixup, I might have left you to your fate."

Redding decided not to insist further. Moreover, he did not think the torture of the Inquisition could have wrung from the Visayan his secret until he chose to tell it. There was much of strength in the character of the little brown man.

"I presume," mused Redding, "that you are acquainted with this last possessor of the idol, the man who snatched it from you, judging from the words you sent after him."

"The demon Bartolo!" exclaimed Pepe in a strangely shaking voice. "I do know him. He, too, wants the idol—which he has, if he can but get away with it; and if he can steal one of the ever-watched barotes on the side of the island opposite that on which you located, he will succeed. His name, senor, is Bartolo Latore; and if he is not a madman after the two years he has spent on Karinunda, then it is a great wonder. There is a deep hatred between him and the Karinundans, a mortal hatred."

"But why," Redding queried, "does Bartolo want the idol?"

"Senor, I may not say any more of the demon except that he is a man whose path is a dangerous one to cross," Pepe answered.

Redding found it hard to get his mind from the idol.

"Does the god Ngah belong to Bartolo by rights?" he asked, now a bit piqued at the other's reticence.

"It does not," was the Visayan's ready answer. "Nor does it belong to me. But let us plan for the safety of your comrade. Bartolo has the weapons you brought to Karinunda, and work toward rescuing the little senor will be slow without them."

"Where," asked Redding, "does Bartolo stay?"

"In the jungle. And be assured that were he easily found the Karinundans would long ago have found him and burned him, knowing full well that he was here to take away their god."

Following this the two became silent. Each was busy with his own thoughts, and both were trying hard to think of some way by which Silverthorn might be rescued from the fanatical clutches of the savages.

Suddenly Ben Redding sat up straight, at the same time stretching one arm toward the valley.

"Look, Pepe!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "The temple is on fire!"

"And the little senor is within it!" cried Pepe, with genuine solicitude.

The flames soon began to eat at the great bulk of dry grasses and nipa and bamboo like the thousand licking tongues of some mythical monster, and the whole valley was lighted bright from the red glare. With one accord, Pepe and Redding started for the scene of the conflagration, neither seeming to realise his own danger in his anxiety for Silverthorn's safety.

They saw in the valley below a dark figure leaning forward and racing wildly toward them; and, following madly after, a confused mass of hordes of the savage Karinundans, brandishing flashing krises and barongs as they ran.

At first Redding believed the solitary person to be Silverthorn; but that hope was blasted when the pursued man came to a halt, turned, and opened fire with a revolver.

"It is Bartolo!" exclaimed Pepe. "He has hidden the idol, then stolen back to fire the temple in the spirit of revenge! Ah, senor, you cannot imagine the depth of the hatred he has for the Karinundans. Truly, he is a madman—and small wonder!"

"Let's approach him from behind and recover the weapons," suggested Redding. "We can use them in forcing our way to the temple."

And, without waiting for the Visayan to speak, he quickened his already rapid pace down the slope and toward the tragedy that was being enacted in the red glow of the fire. Pepe, whatever he thought of the idea, followed closely.

It was a matter of but a few minutes to come upon Bartolo. The latter had just uttered a cry of triumph as a savage threw his barong; kris and spear in air and crumpled in response to the blazing revolver in his right hand. Then Redding sprang at the hairy one and bore him backward.

Another moment and he and Pepe were in possession of the two weapons and the two belts of cartridges. They were not long in reloading and rushing the horde to cover, what time the wounded Bartolo had made before they reached him. But Bartolo had disappeared as the into vapor.

"Pepe," Redding murmured breathlessly, as they ran toward the fire in the hope that they might reach it in time, "Pepe, you are a jewel."

For Pepe Malana had brought a Karinundan howling to earth at each of the three cracks from the weapon he held in his hand.

"Thanks, senor," replied Pepe, much pleased.

The pair arrived at the temple unhindered. The savages had fallen back everywhere, not being able to brave the muzzles of the strange blue things that had but to point at them to belch fire and scorching to his nostrils, and his eyes smarted. He saw nothing of Silverthorn.

"He is not here," said Pepe Malana, who was at the big American's side. "The little senor is not here."

They turned and hurried to the open air, making for the gate to the inclosure. It had been closed and fastened against them. With ready revolver, Redding sprang forward; but the Visayan caught him by the arm and held on doggedly.

"Don't approach the gate, senor," Pepe begged. "It has strong fastenings, and they would run a kris between the bamboos and stab you."

"Then what shall we do?" Redding asked gloomily, almost at the end of his wits.

"We—"

Pepe did not finish the sentence. From a dozen points on the bamboo stockade came flying simplins—slender, sharp assagais. Redding and the Visayan backed from the wall and began to fire at a group of the simplin throwers, who were clinging to the tops of the bamboos and therefore partly visible.

"Give it to 'em, Pepe!" Redding cried loudly, his American soul stirred to the bottom. "For the love of life give it to 'em!"

It mattered not that the Visayan knew nothing of English; he understood the tones of the white man's voice, and that was sufficient.

CHAPTER VI.

"IN THE HANDS OF FATE."

THE Pandita Ugbar, his mouth foaming in his blind rage, seeming diabolical in the robe of the bright-red figure, seized Silverthorn by the arm and jerked him roughly.

"The little white man," he growled, his contorted features happily indistinct in the poor light of the temple's lamps, "shall take the place of the big white man on the altar of sacrifice."

"Not if I can help it," Silverthorn said to himself, shaken all thru despite his efforts to remain cool. "Not if I can help it, I won't."

It seemed to the young American that the other Karinundans were even more bent on revenge than the pandita. He noted that the priest kept himself busy warning the people that they came too near with their threatening krises and barongs; no doubt Ugbar meant to keep the sacrifice unsullied by a religious, and at the same time cause his captive the more acute suffering of being burned.

The moment Silverthorn's hands and feet were bound with thongs of hide, as his captors were in the act of placing him upon the pile of blackened stones, there happened something very unexpected. The priest, who had stolen out of the two revolvers from the hut on the coast suddenly rushed into the temple and began to fire rapidly into the group of savages, throwing them into a panic. And while all was consternation the Pandita Ugbar seized several of the cocoanut-oil lamps, dashed their contents upon the walls, and then set fire to the inflammable stuff.

This done, he turned and hurried out of the temple by way of the small door that had admitted him. The Karinundans, coming to themselves, uttered weird, angry cries and followed, their primitive weapons scintillating in the glow of the fire, which was spreading quickly over the walls. Either they regarded it a futile thing to attempt to extinguish the flames, or their savage hearts clamored so eagerly for vengeance that all else was forgotten.

Silverthorn now found himself alone in the great hut, and, it appeared to him, abandoned to incineration. He began to struggle, doing his utmost to free himself; and when he felt that it was useless he rolled over the floor. The tortures of the flames, he rolled—into the pool that floated the white boat!

Luckily the water was not of much depth. Silverthorn gained a sitting position, and found his upturned face on the surface. He drew in air and waited.

And because his eyes were closed and his ears immersed, he did not see or hear when Redding and the Visayan when they came to find and rescue him.

When Silverthorn's bonds had soaked for a short time, he surprised to find that they were loosening. The water was causing the hide to stretch! Hope found into his breast, and he began to strain against the thongs. Thus he freed himself.

Just as he was wondering if it were possible to survive a dash thru the curtain of fire that hung in the main doorway, there came to his ears the sound of revolver shots; and among them he heard a big American voice that was grand with the spirit of a great, last fight:

"Give it to 'em, Pepe! For the love of life give it to 'em!"

Tears sprang to Silverthorn's eyes. The battling spirit was in him too, now; and it would take, he swore, a thicker curtain of flame than that in the main doorway to keep him from the aid of Redding's side.

With a pitiful noise in his throat, the little American leaped out of the pool and dashed like a bullet thru the blanket of fire, altho it burned away his eyebrows and eyelashes and much of his hair.

He ran to the two fighting men just in time to see a slender simplin bury its point under the collarbone of the valiant Visayan. Uttering a cry of mingled anger and sympathy, he snatched up his own revolver and belt and sprang to Ben Redding, who was too busily engaged in bringing howls from beyond the stockade to see his comrade until the latter spoke.

"I'm with you, old man!" said Silverthorn. "I'm sure with you!" Redding muttered something fervent.

The two reloaded and fired, reloaded and fired, until the last cartridge was gone. Redding threw his now useless weapon aside and gripped Silverthorn's hand so tightly that it hurt; and when he spoke his voice shook.

"Pity, Kid," he said, "that we didn't have more ammunition; I believe we could have escaped, seeing that the light of the fire is going down."

Without waiting for a reply from Silverthorn, Redding went to the fallen Visayan and bent over him.

"Don't stay in one place; you make such good targets that way, senors," Pepe murmured. "Run—run in circles."

Redding and Silverthorn acted upon the advice of the wounded Visayan, and began to execute movements that rendered them altogether difficult targets.

But the Karinundans had found out that the strange weapons of the white men were now useless. They opened the gate to the inclosure and poured in, howling and clinching their betel-browned teeth in a fury almost ungovernable. At the direction of the Pandita Ugbar, the Americans were bound and taken to a point in the gate of the stockade, into which they were thrown unceremoniously. Pepe Malana they kicked and spat upon, leaving him for dead.

Ugbar, wearing his robe dragging from one shoulder, stood for a long time gazing down at the two captives, most of his white prisoners.

"Tomorrow," he said venomously—"tomorrow we shall—but wait until tomorrow, senors, and see what we shall do."

Then the pandita went to the remains of his temple, leaving the Americans alone on the earthen floor of the hut.

The captives were too busy thinking of some plan of escape to speak for some moments. Redding then whispered cautiously:

"I've got it, Kid."

"Tell it," Silverthorn requested.

"It's this," said Redding: "Roll over to me, with your back to mine, and I'll untie your hands."

Silverthorn almost cried aloud in his enthusiasm. He did as the other had suggested, and within thirty minutes

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more they were free, both hand and foot.

"Now," Redding whispered, trying to work the cramp out of his arms, "we've got to play snake for a while. We've got to crawl every inch of the way out of this village, Kid, on account of the bright moon. And if we're seen—well, Kid, we've got pretty fair use of our running apparatus, haven't we?"

"I'm with you," jubilated Silverthorn. "I'm with you to the end of the world!"

Redding stepped cautiously to the doorway and peered out. No one was near. Beside the ashes of the Temple of Ngah, which he could see thru the open gateway, stood the Pandita Ugbar, inconsolable; and crowding around him, lamenting and chattering in their outlandish jargon, were the inhabitants of the village.

"Good!" Redding told Silverthorn, who had stepped to his side and also had seen. "Let's go now, little Kid, for the sea; and then for anything that looks like a boat."

"And then into the hands of fate," Silverthorn replied, unusually grave.

They set out on hands and knees, and soon they reached the outskirts of the village. Here they rose and began to walk rapidly toward the coast, keeping to one direction by a group of stars that hovered over the horizon to the north.

CHAPTER VII.

BARTOLO AGAIN.

BY DAYBREAK they had crossed the jungle along the coast-lands, having followed a small stream that flowed from the central part of the island to the sea. And before them, drawn up on the crush from the shallow mouth of the creek a long raft of lashed bamboos fitted with a crude sail, they saw the strange, hairy man who had been so determined to possess the idol, the Holy Ngah. And he did possess it—the idol bound firmly to the short mast in the center of the raft.

The Americans drew back without being seen, hiding behind a clump of banana plants.

"Why is he so smitten with that bad luck Stillken?" Silverthorn breathed into Redding's ear.

"Can't understand it," said Redding, as much to himself as to his companion. "And what did the Visayan want with the thing? Kid, I'm halfway decided to force Bartolo to give me all at the point of the knife. There's something big fascinating in the mystery."

For a few moments they remained silently watching the futile attempts of the uncouth person to get his raft into the sea.

Redding's mind had gone back to Pepe Maiana at the mention of his name. Bigbearded, admiring little brown man for the pure gold that was in him, Ben Redding suddenly saw thru a mist.

"Pepe!" he muttered to Silverthorn, who was intently gazing at the man in the water. "I hated to leave Pepe! I'll have to get word to him some. Nothing dark about him but his skin, Kid."

Thru Redding, Silverthorn had heard all about the Visayan.

"May his bones rest in peace," he murmured solemnly.

"Say," Redding whispered, with a sudden enthusiasm, "that raft is big enough for all three of us! Let's stage-manage that fellow that we help him float it, and then accompany him. It may be our only chance, Kid, for we're sure to be followed."

Accordingly they walked down to where Bartolo was working like mad to launch his ungainly craft.

The uncouth one turned upon the Americans with a snarl, and raised the pole which he had been using as a pry. But before the blow could fall Redding sprang into the water and caught the hairy arms.

"Don't!" he said in Spanish. "Let us help you and we'll watch over you. We're anxious to put this island behind us as you can possibly be. We don't want the god; you may keep that, if you'll only tell us about the mystery."

Bartolo was a Spaniard, no doubt. His face lighted somewhat at the sound of his mother tongue. Still, in spite of this, his eyes remained small and wicked.

"I have only your word that you will allow me to keep the idol, senors," he replied, his voice as wicked as his eyes. "You are two to one, you know."

Both the Americans raised their hands.

"We swear," they said earnestly.

"Good!" Bartolo grinned, but a peculiarly untrustworthy expression had become visible on his face, and the Americans were thereby put on their guard. "As to the mystery," Bartolo added, "I'll tell you all when we are safely away. Those accursed Karinundans may come up at any moment."

Soon the three were sliding the long raft seaward by means of poles.

"I have been marooned, I think, for six months; so let us be careful about breaking the lashings," said Bartolo. "It could be that we are on the raft as Busubusug, on Mindanao Island," he ran on, apparently pleased at the prospect of company, "did to make fair speed, too, senors; bamboo floats very high, and you will note that I made the bow pointed, like the stern, also. Those single joints there, senors, are filled with water and food."

"If the water supply remains calm, I think we have a good chance of making Busubusug," replied Redding, pushing with all his might to keep the raft moving.

When the ungainly craft had slipped free into the wavelets, Bartolo leaped upon it joyously.

"The senors may push until the water reached their chests," he suggested.

The senors did so without a murmur.

When Redding and Silverthorn started to scramble aboard, Bartolo treated coarsely raised a pole and forbade it! His features became demoniacal as he threatened and cursed, and his wife's face grew hideous with a glare that could have meant only one thing—madness. And the breeze was every moment carrying the raft toward the open sea.

Besides, the shore was being crowded with scores of Karinundans, who immediately set up a great clamor at the sight of the three white men escaping and carrying away their god, the Holy Ngah!

Again and again did Redding and his little friend implore Bartolo to allow them to come aboard; but mad Bartolo would not listen. The Americans were at a disadvantage because they were unarmed, and they placed a detaining hand upon the raft the bamboo pole came crashing down dangerously close to them.

"What we do must be done quick!" Silverthorn cried. "The savages are wading out after us!"

Silverthorn was up to his chin in the water.

"Keep this demon's attention," replied Redding, quick as a flash, and invited another blow from the pole in the hands of the raving Bartolo.

The blow came promptly; Redding groaned, threw up his arms, and disappeared.

Silverthorn's eyes filled with tears, and he was for the moment incautious of the flail that cut the air with the rapidity of a hawk's wing. Before Bartolo suspected, in striking him, however, Redding, who had dived under the raft while feigning to have sunk, came up on the other side, madman and threw him down. At this Silverthorn, a cry of joy smothered in his throat, clambered aboard and went to the assistance of his friend.

While the three fought like tigers for the supremacy, the raft continued to drift seaward, with the swimming Karinundans steadily gaining. Bartolo tore with his nails and smote with his fists, using ugly marks on the skins of the Americans. Then Ben Redding, with a masterful effort, got one arm around Bartolo's neck, turned his hip into the hairy stomach, and threw the madman clean over his head and into the water.

"If you'll agree to behave yourself," Redding called out, breathing hard, "we'll take you aboard, seeing that this craft is yours."

"Never!" sputtered Bartolo, approaching them with a new attack.

Both Redding and little Silverthorn saw the tragedy plainly. The Karinundans who were swimming toward the raft suddenly gave shrieks of terror and turned wildly for the shore, crying:

"Tiharon! Tiharon!"

It was their name for the shark.

There was the lightning-like glint of a long, lithe body, the flick of a great dorsal fin and the slash of a huge forked tail—and all that was left of Bartolo was a tinge of red in the waters.

The Americans eyed each other for a moment without speaking; then Redding adjusted the crude sail, and a fair wind carried them out to sea. It was slow, but it was getting away from Karinunda.

They kept the raft's nose turned due north as far as was possible with the bunglesome steering device Bartolo had fashioned, both men watching for the black raincloud of typhoon. The white idol was still lashed to the mast.

That afternoon they hailed a little copra steamer bound for Manila, the Island Belle, whose captain was a genial Englishman, and who hove to in order to take them aboard.

"We've brought the thing this far," smiled Redding, pointing to the idol, just as the Island Belle's boat came up; "suppose we take it the rest of the way?"

Silverthorn cut away the thongs that had bound it to the mast, and carried it aboard the steamer wrapped in his coat.

CHAPTER VIII.

DON VALENTINO OF PANAY.

SEVERAL days later, Ben Redding and Ryder Silverthorn, dressed in immaculate duck, strolled into the Escolta in Manila and to a museum, to which they presented, with none of its history, however, the image of which Silverthorn still persisted in calling a bad luck Billiken. Then they returned to their hotel, the Saddle-Rock, and sat in chairs in the lobby. There they sat smoking and listening to the strains of a small orchestra.

A slender brown-skinned man, attractive attire, with a wound showing plainly on his right cheek, walked up to them. It was Pepe Maiana of Panay!

Redding and Silverthorn rose to their feet, glad to know that he had escaped—both from Karinunda and Karinundans. Pepe explained that he had feigned death until the savages left him, when he had dragged himself to the coast, found a barote, and set forth; afterward he had been picked up by a Government transport, where his wound was treated.

An elderly man, well-dressed and distinguished-looking with his pointed beard and upturned mustaches, had followed Pepe up to the Americans.

"I would have given much," he remarked, "if you could have brought the god with you."

Redding told him that the idol was then in the museum.

At this both Pepe and the elderly man evinced signs of joy. The latter person, in Spanish, then introduced himself as Don Valentino Villafonde of Panay, and suggested that the two Americans go with him to the other side of the island, and the image was once more restored to the hands of its rightful owner.

"Now," smiled Redding, "I demand to know the mystery."

Don Valentino agreed to make everything clear. An hour later, Redding and Silverthorn rapped at the door of his room, Pepe admitting them. And when the four were seated, the don began:

"The god was given me by my brother, who had received it from his father, who thought it a thing of ill luck—and, truly, its trail has been a trail of blood and of misery. It was given to my home on the island of Panay by a former bosom friend, Bartolo Latore, who had been visiting me, and who, after he confided the secret connected with it. One very dark night Bartolo boarded the vessel El Grando at the Iloilo seaport. Pride, with the god wrapped in a curtain. The vessel, which was bound for Busubusug, struck a coral reef about a few hours before the dawning of the day on which she was expected to make port.

"When Bartolo knew that the ship was doomed, he placed the god in a boat and lowered it; but the boat was swept away from him, and drifted alone to the shores of Karinunda. Bartolo, a wild being, with but one object in his life, which was the possession of the god, left Pepe's part, that he was wished to return the image to me, being much devoted to me for having saved him from being burned at the stake as a boy. It was this devotion which kept him from telling you the secret—he feared you. Then, on the head of the god, senors, is very hard wax; it seals up the opening to a hollow which contains the jewels of the family for generations back! They are worth many thousand dollars in any market, but to me they are of no value. I kept them in the image because my servants were superstitious about it; I felt that they were safer there.

"I do not believe in ill luck. I believe Bartolo's taking the god was solely from a spirit of revenge—because Pepe Maiana had asked it, perhaps—I am soon going to consign the image to the waters of the river below."

He forced upon the two Americans a thick bundle of bank notes, assuring them that they deserved it. To Pepe he gave a bag of gold; but Pepe pushed it back and asked for a cigarette.

The End.

* * *

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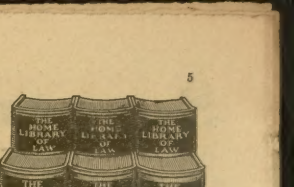

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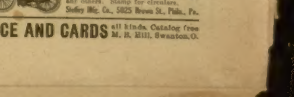
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Serpent and Dove

Or, The Heiress of Hedstone Hall

By T. C. Harbaugh

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE TWO CAPSULES.

THRU the long hours that followed Hasketh Seaforth's return, to Hedstone Hall, Lucille was unremitting in her attentions to her patient. Dan had been brought back by Martin Box, and the detective with few explanations slipped away toward Ashboro. As for Dan himself he spoke but little. Where he had been and what were his adventures no one knew. Lucille resolved at last to leave him to his secret. The ultimatum which she had presented to Doctor Burke had been indignantly rejected. And no wonder.

She offered to become his wife if he would absolve Hasketh from all crime in connection with the death of her uncle. This was too much for the man from the North.

Evidently the heiress of the Hall felt that she was to have her proposition rejected, for when the paper fluttered at her feet, and she saw Nicholas Burke tramp from her presence, a proud smile wreathed her lips, and she turned to Mona. There was now but little for her to do but wait.

Hasketh was back and that was a relief. He was once more under a friendly roof, and she could watch over him in hopes that the cloud that obscured his reason would lift and give the sun a chance to shine once more on the old plantation.

It was the second day after Hasketh's return when, entering the patient's room, she saw Mona bending over him. Lucille paused on the threshold and stared wonderingly.

From beneath the bandages that almost covered Hasketh's face a pair of lusterless eyes were turned to Mona.

"You must not talk," said the blind girl, addressing him. "You have been hurt, Hasketh."

Lucille tiptoed forward.

"Hurt?" came the low reply and a hand was lifted feebly to the hidden forehead.

"There! Not a word," Mona went on. "By and by you can tell all you know," and then, catching the light sounds of Lucille's tread, the blind girl whirled on her heel.

"What has he been saying?" cried Lucille, and her hand clutched her companion's arm.

"I have told him that he must say nothing—yet," was the reply.

"But he did speak?"

"Just two words—'the cove.'"

"Yes, we know that," said Lucille, "He was going back to the awful tragedy there."

"Perhaps. It would be natural, you know."

Lucille bent over the bed and regarded Hasketh in silence.

The door behind the two girls opened. Both turned at the sound and looked into the face of Martin Box.

"Where are the clothes?" asked Martin.

"Over yonder in the wardrobe."

The detective crossed the room and opened the little door set in the wall. He was watched by Lucille, who wondered why he was rummaging thru the garments on the hooks.

Presently Martin Box turned toward them and held out his hand. Two small capsules rested in the palm.

"You see they are not alike, miss," said Martin. "One is brown and the other gray."

Lucille nodded, but her lips did not unclose.

"This one," proceeded the detective, touching the grayish capsule, "I found in his pocket. The brown one I got elsewhere."

"Are they deadly?"

"We will know by and by," was the evasive reply. "You know what Dan said at the inquest?"

Lucille's cheeks turned pale again. "It is the old suspicion," she almost gasped.

"It is, Miss Van Cleve," said Martin. "If Hasketh really placed some drug in your uncle's night glass it may have been from a capsule similar to the grayish one."

"But you don't think, Mr. Box—"

"I'm thinking a good deal now," was the interruption. "It is my duty, miss."

"But this one!" and Lucille tremblingly touched the brown capsule.

"It is not the gray one's mate, that's pretty certain. They don't match by a long shot," and with this he transferred the pair to his pocket and with another glance at Hasketh left the room.

Martin Box went straight to Ashboro and selected the best horse in the livery stable. Cantering slowly from the village, he turned into a well-defined road and then gave his steed the spur. For nearly two hours he kept up a rapid gait nor drew rein till he was in a village almost the exact counterpart of the one he had left. A doctor's sign swung lazily in the warm breeze, and Martin Box drew rein in front of it.

Cephas Fulton had graduated from one of the best medical colleges in the country, a smallish man with a keen, intelligent countenance and a pair of dark, blue eyes. People who wondered why a man of his acquirements had been content to settle in that neighborhood would have had their curiosity was open to him, but he had never answered their questions. Doctor Fulton received his visitor with a warm welcoming smile.

With scant preliminary words the detective took from his pocket the two capsules and carefully unwrapped the paper that harbored them.

"Look at these things, doctor," said he, looking up into the observant eyes above his face.

Cephas Fulton donned his glasses and went to work. Martin did not take his eyes from him for a second.

"This is one of the most remarkable incidents in my medical career," said the little doctor at last.

"Yes?"

"Where did you get this one?" and touching the gray capsule he fixed his gaze on Martin Box.

"I found it in the clothes worn by Hasketh Seaforth."

"And this other one?"

"That's another story, doctor," smiled the detective.

"It must be, for the capsules are not alike."

"What is the brown one, doctor?"

"It contains the subtlest poison in the world."

"And you call it——"

"Curare."

"Make no mistake, doctor."

"I am making none. After my graduation I took a trip thru the Amazon Valley. I became familiar with the poison used by the natives of that marvelous region. When I came home I scientifically studied this drug and spent some time in devising an antidote."

"And were you successful?"

"To an extent that astonished me."

"But I thought there was no antidote for curare."

"I thought so, too, but perseverance rewarded me."

Martin Box leaned back in his chair and for a minute remained watchfully silent. "Now, doctor," said he, "let me remove the veil of mystery that surrounds the brown capsule. I found it in the cove where Hasketh Seaforth was shot."

"You found it there?"

"Yes, shining in the weeds."

"Well?"

"The man who shot Hasketh Seaforth dropped it. The lover of Miss Van Cleve has been accused of poisoning Morgan Dalray. He invaded Hedstone Hall on several occasions and dropped something into the planter's night glass."

"From which capsule?" queried Doctor Fulton.

"If from the brown one, the one I found in his pocket, it could be its mate."

A look of confirmation came into the doctor's eyes.

"You reason pretty well, sir," said he. "Is the gray capsule deadly?"

"No."

"But the other one would kill?"

"Undoubtedly."

"I'll take them both," said Martin Box, reaching out his hand. "I have use for them," and he began to rewrap his possessions.

"What are Seaforth's chances?" he

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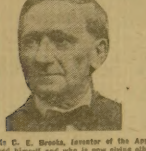

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suddenly continued.

"He has a chance."

"If love and devotion count for anything his recovery is assured."

"I have seen that in Miss Van Cleve's looks."

The detective rose and prepared to leave.

"The thing that now puzzles me," said Doctor Fulton, "is if Hasketh Seaforth used the grayish capsules where did he get them?"

"But you have just said that they will not kill."

"I will state my professional judgment on that. I wonder if Lucas Manly is in them?"

"Who is Lucas Manly, doctor?"

"A fellow student who went with me to South America and who helped me to discover the antidote to curare."

"There is, I believe, one man who can answer your question."

"And that one man is——"

"Hasketh Seaforth. If his reason ever returns we'll ask him, doctor. Good morning," and Martin Box was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GREAT LIGHT.

THERE were long days of watching at Hedstone Hall. What they would finally bring about no one knew. Now Hasketh showed signs of returning reason and again the hope vanished.

It was shortly before midnight when Lucille, weary of her vigil, crept softly from the room with a longing glance at the sleeper and sought her chamber for a few moments of repose. The wind, which had been high, had abated its fury and the stillness without was almost weird.

Martin Box had not returned since his previous visit and Dan, who was the last person he had seen, said he did not know when the detective would come back.

Suddenly as she slept Lucille, rousing from a troubled dream, left her couch and stood breathless and in a listening attitude in the middle of the room. A light footfall went down the hall beyond the door.

It was Mona's well known tread and a wan smile flitted over Lucille's face as she heard the sound die away in the corridor.

She moved to the window and pulled aside the drapery. It was light enough for her to distinguish objects on the lawn, and to her surprise she beheld the blind girl emerge from the house and take off toward Ashboro.

Her first impulse was to dart after her, but knowing that Mona knew the grounds as well as the she could see, she resisted the temptation and soon the figure of the girl vanished from sight.

Let us follow Mona.

As if guided by eyes that saw, she struck off the broader road leading to the town, keeping in the middle of the road and stepping bravely on.

A short time elapsed ere she entered Ashboro and made her way down the main street.

Both sides of this humble thorofare were lined with southern maples, and Mona, putting out one hand, touched them as she passed along.

Was she counting them, or was she searching for a certain tree? Presently she paused and turned toward a house the porch of which was reached by several steps. She crossed this porch and turned the knob of a door. In a moment she was in a hall the wall of which she felt inquiringly. A few steps more brought her to another door which she opened. A slight noise and a little exclamation from a man greeted her. Mona stopped at once.

Doctor Leo Dredge, disturbed by the blind one's entrance, was staring at her in ill humor. "Why have you come here?" he asked.

Mona found the table at which the little doctor sat and laid one hand on its edge. "Oh, I have found you?" she exclaimed in tones of triumph. "I feared you might not be at home."

Dredge, red in the face, drew back and looked at her. "Are you not afraid to be out at night?" he queried, but the interrogation only brought a smile to Mona's face.

"What should I fear?" was the reply. "Who would hurt me, doctor?"

"You don't know what evil-disposed persons are abroad at this uncanny hour. It is past midnight."

"I heard the clock at the Hall strike twelve before I came away."

"But why have you come?"

Mona drew closer to the spot from whence the tones had come. "I have come for a panacea for Dan," she resumed.

"For that wretch?" The words rasped bitingly over Dredge's lips.

"Dan is no wretch," exclaimed the blind girl. "Dan has always been good to me. They say that the hair of the dog will cure the bite. I have come to you for a panacea."

A grim smile settled over Dredge's countenance.

"Dan says it was you, who blinded him. He must not be my mate in darkness. Dan talks to himself when he thinks no one is listening," she said.

"He does, eh? And pray, what does Dan say?" asked Dredge.

"He says that he heard the shot that almost took Hasketh Seaforth's life. The poor fellow had gone to the cove, seeking some place where he could nurse his affliction alone, and there he heard the brutal shot."

"I have no panacea for Dan!" gruffly answered Dredge. "You must go back, girl." He put out his hand and grasped Mona's wrist. "You are wasting time here," he went on. "Dan invaded my house with the air of a bully. He lost out. I am not to be browbeaten by a low ruffian like him."

"But you consort with a man far below Dan. You are the co-conspirator of Doctor Burke!"

It seemed to Leo Dredge that the sightless eyes flashed fire as their owner spoke.

"God and Doctor Fulton are going to bring Hasketh out of the shadows. They are going to save him to make Lucille happy," she said.

"Let them save him, then!" growled Dredge.

"What are you going to do for Dan?" persisted Mona. "Are you going to give me the restoring medicine?"

"Not for that human wolf."

"Very well." The voice of the blind girl straightened into magnificent proportions. "I am not always to be shut out from God's light, Doctor Dredge. Sometsing has long told me that I shall see again. Already in dreams I have seen."

He was inclined to laugh at her prophecy, but restrained himself.

"Do you remember what I said to Doctor Burke at the inquest?" she demanded.

"Well, yes, in a manner."

"I asked him to tell all he knows about the master's death, but when he opened his mouth it was to utter a denial which was a lie. When I entered the master's room that fatal night I heard Doctor Burke leave it. Why was he there? Why did he sneak away like a coward, leaving me alone with the dead? And why, when he came back, did he charge me with being the accomplice of Hasketh Seaforth, whom he accuses of the dread crime? Why?"

"You are rambling, girl," cried Dredge. "I cannot sit here and hear one of my profession impugned. It is contrary to the ethics of our profession."

"A profession which men have debased," stingingly answered Mona.

"Enough!" cried Dredge, rising. "But for your affliction I would not have put up with you this long."

"Treat me as one who sees," was the quick response. "Forget that I am blind, Doctor Dredge. But don't forget that there is hanging over the heads of the guilty a veritable sword of Damocles!"

His hand tightened on Mona's wrist. In another moment he was dragging her across the carpet. "It is storming now," said he at her ear. "The lightning is very vivid——"

"But it is God's lightning!" broke in

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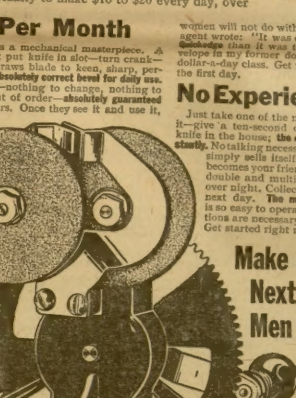

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Mona. "It is as the flaming sword that will reveal the guilty."

He pushed her from the room and out into the hall. For a moment he seemed to hesitate as if he did not care to thrust the girl out into the night, but the qualms of conscience fled and he led her upon the porch.

At that moment a flash so terrible cut the heavy murk that with an inward cry of terror the doctor of Ashboro staggered back, while the blind girl was forced to her knees at the edge of the porch. He heard her ringing cry of horror.

"The light! The light!" exclaimed Mona, as she tottered to her feet. "At last, oh, God, I see!"

Leo Dredge stood like one stricken by the hand of the Invisible. A cold sweat leaped out on his brow. In the light that streamed from his window Mona was standing erect and in her eyes was a light he had never seen there before.

"I am blind no longer!" he heard her cry. "I always said I would see again, but who thought it would come in the lightning's flash?"

The speechless doctor's eyes had a stare. Incredulity, he seemed to be shivering from head to foot.

"I'll go back now," continued Mona. "For it is no longer groping in the dark. When the day of vengeance comes I shall see the writhings of the guilty."

He let her pass and sprang back into his little office.

Mona left the porch and fled up the rain-swept street. Down the road she went, pelted by the heavy drops and now and then pressing her hands to her eyes.

"The great light! The blessed light!" she would exclaim. "I knew I would not be always blind!"

Joy fell speed to her feet. In a few minutes she was beyond the confines of Ashboro and on the road to the Hall.

She hailed its light with a joyous cry. Over the wet lawn she sped and up the steps that led to the veranda. At the head of the stairway she stopped and then turned suddenly toward Hasketh's room.

"I have never seen his face," she murmured. "Lucille has always told me that it is handsome. Now I shall see."

She opened the door and paused. A figure was bending over Hasketh Seaforth's couch. As Mona's footfalls fell upon the man's ears he whirled abruptly and faced her. She heard Burke say:

"You!" cried Mona, springing forward. "You, serpent of the colder clime? Why are you here? Did you come to finish your work? Go! I am blind no longer, Doctor Burke!"

Nicholas Burke recoiled speechless, terror-stricken.

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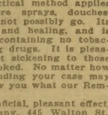

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CHAPTER XIX.
ALMOST AT BAY.

IT IS no wonder that Nicholas Burke recoiled at sight of Mona when she confronted him in the chamber where Hasketh Seaforth lay.

Her startling words were hardly needed to tell him that her terrible infirmity had departed. He saw a new light in her eyes and in their depths lurked an accusation that thrilled every fiber of his being.

With her gaze fastened upon him he slunk from the room, and Mona watched him till the door had closed upon his hated figure.

Hasketh, who heard her voice, lifted his head and stretched out his hand. Mona approached the bed. "Was Doctor Burke here?" she asked the injured man.

"Yes, I found the serpent alone with you."

"I heard some one enter the room," Hasketh returned. "I caught the sound of gliding footsteps and opened my eyes. Who sent Burke to man to me?"

"No one. He must have come of his own initiative."

"But you, girl?" Hasketh was staring into Mona's face. "You have changed."

"Have I?" answered Mona, smiling. "And why should I not change? I am blind no longer."

"Thank heaven!"

"Yes, the exclamation came from above. It was God's lightning," and Mona told the story of her visit to Doctor Dredge, the storm, the flash and the return of her sight.

Half an hour later the girl slipped from the room and ascended the broad stair. She burst into Lucille's presence and halted before her.

"Who sent for Doctor Burke?" she exclaimed.

"No one, dear."

"But he has been here. He was in Hasketh's room. I saw him."

"You—you saw him?"

"With my own eyes," cried Mona. "I see, Lucille! Oh, the blessed lightning!"

Meanwhile Doctor Burke was thundering back to town. Whipping his horse to the utmost he was putting many a rod behind him. Then when he reached Dredge's office he sprang from the gig and bounded up the steps.

"You come in a whirlwind, doctor," cried the little doctor, almost falling from his chair.

"And why shouldn't I? The girl sees!"

Leo Dredge snapped out a little laugh. "I knew she would. That was why I said it was the lightning."

"Death and the fiend! And that she should find me with Seaforth!"

"It's a piece of passing ill luck, nothing more," returned Dredge. "If I had held the girl back——"

"Why didn't you?"

"I was quite myself topsy-turvy by the flash and her restoration to sight."

Nicholas Burke arose to his feet and looked at Dredge.

"You're not going to give up the fight?" inquired the latter.

"Not I. Never yet was a woman to fight, and I've managed women before."

The Northern doctor took several rapid strides across the carpet.

"I'll go to my room now," said he, a minute later, addressing the little doctor. "Don't think for a moment that I'm defeated. With Hedstone Hall and a bride as stakes in this game I shall yet win out."

He paced down the narrow street and entered the home of a widow named Gump, injecting himself into the stirring drama. He locked the door behind him and threw his hat upon the table.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet and darted across the room. His face blanched when he opened a little cupboard, set in the wall. He thrust his hand into the opening and rummaged along the several shelves.

"Who's been here?" fell in startling tones from his lips. "Some infernal scoundrel has invaded this room?" The echo of his own words was the only answer he received.

"I've got to fight more than the woman," he said to himself, as he went back to the table, "for she became of Gump! He came here. He swore he would carry out his instructions. Has the lout betrayed me? Is he a spy, or has Gump proved coward or traitor?"

Then his thoughts went back to the man he had left. "I'll see if Dredge has turned coward," he exclaimed, seizing his hat. "If he has——" He did not finish the sentence, but bounded from the room and rushed out into the night.

"Look here," Dredge instantly became aware in Doctor Dredge's office, "are you showing the white feather?"

Dredge's look instantly became a stare. "What's happened, Nicholas?"

"Everything. My room has been invaded!"

"By whom?"

"You look innocent, doctor."

"I am innocent. But what has happened?"

"The night glass has been stolen!"

"The one you carried away from the Hall?"

"There is no other," snapped Burke. "You don't think I would take it?"

"Not unless you've lost your nerve."

"In a game like this?" stammered Leo Dredge.

Nicholas Burke sprang like a tiger toward the table. "You don't look right to me," he cried. "You're weakened at the supreme moment. Where is the night glass?"

His long, dangerous hand was gripping Doctor Dredge's arm, and that worthy was gazing at him like one suddenly deprived of reason.

"In the first place," said Dredge, when he found his tongue, "you were a fool to keep it."

"You took it, then?"

"I haven't touched it."

"You shall!"

"Don't go too far with me."

"You want to shield your own guilt," went on Doctor Burke, growing more furious every moment. "Where is it?"

The two men were facing one another with the fury of distrust and rage.

"I'll choke the very life out of you if you don't hand over the night glass," roared Burke.

"What I never took I can't restore," was the savage retort.

Instantly with a curse the hand of Doctor Burke shot from arm to throat and Dredge was forced back into his chair. His snaky eyes seemed to bulge from his head.

Cowardice has transformed you into a child," flashed the Northern doctor. "It was an evil day when I leagued myself with you!"

"It is my undoing," was the faint reply from beneath the choking talons.

Dredge gave a last look under the mad hand of his associate.

Nicholas Burke sprang back and began to search the room. He went every- where in his mad fury. Closets and drawers were jerked open, the smallest nooks were ransacked and at last, unrewarded, he turned away.

"Maybe the fool didn't take it," he said. "But if he hasn't, who's the game. Why didn't Handy Gump carry out his oath?"

Leo Dredge was still inanimate in his chair. There was a pallor on his face which counterfeited death. Nicholas Burke threw a hasty look at him.

"Oh, he'll come around all right," said he. "It takes more than a little choking to kill a rattlesnake," and with this cheering remark he walked across the carpet, opened the door and left the house.

Once more he was in his little room farther down the street. The darkness had deepened and the winds had lulled. There was not a sound in the sleeping town but a curfew.

"If the girl hadn't come when she did," retorted the doctor, "I would have finished the game. I'd have undone all of Fulton's meddling. I'd have planted a sure agent back to the Hall at that supreme moment——"

He helped himself to a glass of brandy, which brought a ruddy glow to his cheeks and seemed to impart a certain additional fire to his nerves.

Suddenly he darted from the room, which was on an upper floor, and sprang down the narrow stairway. "Mrs. Greene?" he called at a door. "Will you come into the hall a moment?"

The portal swung ajar and his landlady, a little woman, made her appearance.

"Has any one not of this house been upstairs within the last twenty-four hours, madam?"

The little woman shook her head.

"No one to my knowledge, doctor."

"Not even the servant?"

"Not even Sarah."

"That's all, thank you, Mrs. Greene."

The round little woman paced back up the stair. "I'll get at the bottom of this new mystery," said he in audible tones when Mrs. Greene was out of hearing. "I'll not throw down the cards at this stage of the game. Hedstone Hall and a wife are worth playing for and I'm the man to win both."

The opening of his door at that moment startled him. He paused

"For one thing," began Martin Box, in calculating tones, "I have called to restore some lost property. You may not have missed it, doctor, but it got away just the same."

As he concluded the detective took from his coat pocket a little box which he placed in the most nonchalant manner on the table. Burke's gaze was immediately riveted upon it.

"Here it is," proceeded Martin, and he lifted the cover and took from the box—the missing night glass!

There was just the least start on Burke's part.

"I just wanted to see what this glass had contained. I have been rewarded."

The light in Burke's eyes seemed to be crossed by a flash of lightning. He could not restrain the words that bubbled to his lips. "You are the thief, then!" he hissed.

"That's a hard word, doctor, but I accept it without dispute," smiled Martin. "I knew that to ask you for the night glass would be a waste of words. Therefore I took upon myself the liberty of abstracting it. It's quite clean now. The sediment found in it is safe-keeping. It has been analyzed by your fellow student, Manly, the man who accompanied you to the wilds of the Amazon years ago."

"Manly!"

"You have not forgotten him? Nice fellow and up in toxicology, by the way. He's been in Macon these ten years—not, perhaps, the place for a man of his scientific acquirements, but he prefers quiet. You will admit that he makes few mistakes."

"I'm admitting nothing."

"No? Well, doctor, Manly says that the night glass last contained the active principle of curare."

There was no reply, only a curving of the lips of the man who was listening.

"Shall I switch the subject, doctor?" Martin went on in the same imperturbable manner. "Anything for a change. The other night Hasketh Seaforth, who came back to Ashboro after an absence of some days, was shot in a Mediterranean Cove. He was found there nearly dead, and certainly deprived of his reasoning faculties. The police sent for Dr. Seaforth left at the scene of the tragedy this."

Again the detective's hand dived into the recesses of his pocket and a little capsule rolled across the table. It stopped undemeath Dr. Burke's eye.

"The sediment in Morgan Dalray's night glass and the contents of that capsule are identical. It is curare. There is another capsule in my possession, a grayish one which I found in Hasketh Seaforth's clothing. It holds what is regarded as an antidote to this South American poison. You will recollect that it was proved before the coroner's jury that Seaforth visited Hedstone Hall at dead of night and was seen to drop something into the night glass. Upon this proof the charge of murder was formally lodged against him. Not only this, but Mona, the then blind girl, was charged with being Seaforth's accomplice. There! Please don't interrupt me, doctor, for I am almost at the end of my story."

The features of the cool man-hunter grew more tense and there was a sudden tightening of Burke's thin lips.

"The evidence which influenced the coroner's jury would hang Hasketh Seaforth by due course of law," continued Martin Box. "When he saw that Morgan Dalray was nearing the grave thru some mysterious malady which indicated poison, he went to Macon and found your friend Manly. Doctor Manly at once pronounced the malady the work of some secret poison, probably curare. It was from Manly that Seaforth obtained the antidote which he dropped into the night glass in hopes of arresting the work of the terrible agent. He was forced to make his visits secret, for Dalray held an antipathy to him."

"Hold!" cried Doctor Burke, throwing up his hand. "Morgan Dalray was afflicted before I came to Hedstone Hall."

"That is true."

"He was suffering from poisoning——"

"From the administration of minute doses of curare. The man who administered the drug was not to give enough to kill."

"Wait!" cried Doctor Burke, leaning forward. "You assume everything, Martin Box."

"I assume nothing," was the quick retort. "I have just come from Doctor Dredge."

"From that infamous scoundrel?"

"From the man whom you have just choked under the impression that he filched the night glass from your room. Leo Dredge has confessed everything."

Amid the silence that followed this announcement the fall of a feather might have been heard.

"I fancy you went a little too far with your accomplice, Doctor Burke," Box resumed. "You know men don't like to be choked into insensibility. Doctor Dredge is one of the best."

Martin Box arose to his feet and looked down into the drawn face, almost purple in the light of the lamp.

"My mission for the present ends here," he went on. "The high sheriff of Ashboro now steps upon the stage."

The door knob turned with a little click. "There's your man, sheriff," cried Martin Box, pointing to the man in the middle of the room.

Nicholas Burke recoiled and his hand darted toward his pocket, but the scant space was cleared with a bound and the hand of the sheriff closed on his wrist.

"Good night, doctor," smiled Martin Box. "Handy Gump failed in his mission. I sent him north on the night train."

With this Martin turned swiftly and walked out of the room, and those who remained heard the clatter of his feet as he went down the stairs.

* * * * * *

"What riles me is that they won't let me give the devil his dues," growled Dan a week after the interview just recorded. "I want only five minutes with Doc Dredge, who tried to blind me with his infernal powder. I'd save the State of Georgia some expense, and maybe give the undertaker a job. I'm going to get my eyes back all right, thanks to Doctor Fulton and none to Dredge, who started Morgan Dalray on the road to death and then sent for Nicholas Burke to bring him out of the shadows, and take as his fee Hedstone Hall and Miss Lucille. Was there ever such a pair of rascals? And they got Phin Campbell, the postmaster, mixed up in the deal, and he stole Seaforth's letter to Lucille in which he explained his absence. If somebody don't hold me I'll have it out with Dredge before the law can deal with him."

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Dan," said Hasketh, laying his hand restrainingly on the old servant's arm. "The plot has failed and I'm getting well. There'll be happiness yet in the Hall. Why shouldn't there be? Mona is no longer blind and you're not too old——"

"Don't think of it for a holy minute," broke in Dan. "She's vice-mistress here and I'm only a servant."

"But one of nature's noblemen," answered Seaforth.

"Can't think of it for a second, I swan I can't," and Dan walked away, suddenly remembering that the bridge between the Hall and Ashboro was slightly out of repair.

It was when the magnolias were again ahloom and all nature smiling that Doctor Fulton alighted before the door of his old mansion and ran nimbly up the vine-garlanded steps.

"I guess you didn't know there's two weddings on the program today, Doc," cried Dan, when he extended his hand in the new arrival. "I just couldn't think o' proposing to Miss Mona for a long time, but Miss Lucie put in an oar and there you are!"

And when Lucille in her bridal gown greeted Fulton her eyes sparkled with new brightness and the sun, coming out at that moment, clothed the old Hall in a loveliness which gave it a touch of paradise.

When all was made clear it became known that the mandate which commanded Lucille to become the wife of Doctor Burke had been forced from Morgan Dalray, and that, having secured it, the infamous actor of the prisoner hastened the planter's end.

What became of Handy Gump was never known, and Martin Box did not care to renew the acquaintance of the despicable fellow.

The plot for Lucille and Hedstone Hall had failed, and so full was the happiness that those who inhabited it under the white blossoms of the magnolias never mentioned the names of the conspirators, and in the joys of double wedded life tried to forget that the shadow of crime had ever rested on the dear old place.

The End.

* * *

The Shopper.

Scene in department store. Enter Manhattan Islander.

"Where is the ribbon counter?"

"Baby?" questions the floorwalker.

"What?"

"Baby ribbon?"

"No, for my wife."

"I mean is it the narrow baby ribbon you wish?"

"I don't wish, and I haven't any baby, either wide or narrow."

"You don't understand——"

"I understand more about my domestic affairs than any other person I know, even a floorwalker."

"What sort of ribbon was it?"

"Yellow."

"Third aisle over, last counter." Man goes four aisles over. "Ribbons?" Clerk directs him: "Next aisle."

Man takes next aisle in wrong direction. "Ribbons?"

"Two aisles back; no, this way, sir." "Ribbon counter?"

"Whitercolored an' whatwidth?"

"Yellow," says the dazed creature.

"Narrowwide?"

"Oh, I don't care what make it is; just yellow ribbon."

"Will this do?"

"No, not half as wide——"

"If you had a sample——"

"Of course, I've got a sample. I forgot all about it." He produces sample.

Clerk examines it and sniffs. "We've got a bit of bacon, and then we can have lunch."

It Worked.

A tramp entered a baker's shop, shivering and rubbing piteously.

"A loaf, please, mum," he said, placing the money on the counter.

The woman handed him one. As he took it, he said, with shaking voice:

"Where's the nearest 'ospital, mum, please?"

"The nearest hospital?" she ejaculated. "Yes, mum. I'm feelin' very bad. I believe I'm sickenin' for something—the scarlet fever, I think."

"What!" she shrieked. "Get out o' my shop."

He turned submissively to obey.

"Here, take your money!" she cried. He did so and, preparing the bread, said humbly: "You'll take yer loaf, won't yer, mum?"

"Get out o' my shop!"

He crawled out, and with bowed head went round the corner. Presently a hoarse pronounce of wretchedness came toward him.

"Well, Bill!" he said.

"Right-o, 'Enery!" came the answer. "It worked A1, mate. Now, you do it for a bit of bacon, and then we can have lunch."

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Doctor—"I found him quite delirious. He kept begging me to spare his life!"
Wife—"But that was locid enough, wasn't it?"

Apt to Shrink.

The fussy woman was picking over the undressed kid gloves while the weary clerk answered queries.
"Will these gloves wash?" asked the woman.
"They will wash in a solution," replied the clerk.
"Are they guaranteed not to shrink?" asked the woman.
"How can you guarantee undressed kids not to shrink from washing?" demanded the clerk.

Talking Weather.

Patience—"Why do you talked about the weather when he proposed to me."
Impatience—"You don't mean it?"
—"Yes, I do. He said if I married him life would be all sunshine."

Very Much Alive.

Dear Auntie Maud had sent each of the three Nelson children a very beautiful imitation fruit paper-weight glass and nicely colored.
Mrs. Morgan thought they ought to be saved; the kids thought differently.
"Now, you really mustn't eat them, you know," explained mother, in a last desperate effort. "They look awfully pretty, but I'm not sure that the coloring is wholesome. In fact," she went on, dropping her voice in an awesome whisper, "I have heard of children dying from eating colored things."
This thought that would do the trick; but early next morning she found a round out on the back fence, and close to the saw was something that looked like a paper-weight.
"Where are you going, dear?" she asked.
"Going to see if Dick and Arthur are dead yet," replied the 8-year-old miss. "I'm not."

Auntie Was Mistaken.

Five-year-old Freddy often showed pugilistic tendencies. One day he had been using his fists on 3-year-old sister Helen. His visiting auntie said, "Freddy, don't you know that a gentleman never strikes a lady?"
Instantly Helen stopped crying and exclaimed, "They do, too."
"Why, Helen?" said auntie, "when did you ever see a gentleman strike a lady?"
With an air of something proof, the little maid replied, "Why, my daddy spanks me."

Perfectly Welcome.

The man in the next flat was pounding on the wall.
"Look here," he cried, "I can't sleep with your kid yelling like that! If you don't make him stop, I will!"
"Come in, all—come right in!" said the kids' father. "You'll be as welcome as the flowers in spring."

First Tramp—"Dis war is a curse, Bill!"
Second Tramp—"It's orful, Jake! Every freight car loaded full o' ammunition! Not a good comfortable vempty anywhere to be found."

Strict Censorship.

"Your letters are not very fervent, dearest," said Algy, some time after returning at the theatre. "They contain very few terms of endearment."
"I can't help it, Algy. I should like to put in many terms of endearment, but my letters are censored by mother."

Perfectly Good Dog.

Mrs. Jones—"Harry, shall I send Fido to the dog—how-to-get-rid-of-him?"
Mr. Jones—"Oh, dear, I'm afraid he isn't good enough."
Mrs. Jones—"Not good enough! Why, Fido never did anything wrong in his life."

EXTRAORDINARY SOUNDS.

How sweet to hear the murmuring bee
That swiftly sips the flaunting flower!
The locusts hum, how gay and free,
It sounds as fits the summer hour!

The cricket with his chirp makes glad
The twilight as it gathers round,
Even mosquitoes are not bad
When they content themselves with sound.

They mingle with the merry bird
That warbles its melodious tricks—
And from them all no sleight word
That apprentice of the air mixes.

Well Posted.

During President Lincoln's first visit to the Springfield penitentiary, an old inmate, addressing the President, remarked:
"Well, Mr. Lincoln, you and I ought to be well posted on prisons. We've been all there are in the country."
"Why, this is the first one I ever visited," replied the chief executive, somewhat astonished.
"Yes," was the reply, "but I've been in all the rest."

A Definite Answer.

It was the office of the great sporting newspaper, and the gold editor was talking to a brief holiday. In his absence the inquiries from readers which the gold editing man answered thru his correspondence column were handed to the racing editor.
"Which is the better course?" wrote an ardent follower of the royal and ancient game, "to finish one's putt or to putter on the tee?"
The turf man lifted back his chair and smoked five cigarettes before inking his pen in hand. Then, when he had come to a decision on the weighty problem, he wrote the answer:
"Should a player snuggle his iron, there is permissible for him to fondle his putt; but a better plan would be to drop his niblick suppy into the pringle and smoodle it in."

The Reason.

"Odd, isn't it, that age is a recommendation in wine and a drawback in women?"
"Not at all. You can put it down to the one, but you have to put up with it in the other."

A Family Talk.

"See here, Jones, you've had that telephone receiver at your ear for ten minutes and haven't uttered a word."
"S-sh! I'm having a typical conversation with my wife."

Long Arm of the Curate.

She—"Isn't it strange the curate put his arm around her three times last night."
He—"The hounder must have a terribly long arm."

ROUND HANDS.

If your correspondents borrow,
Don't correspond by 'phone;
Always post up till tomorrow,
Those you have done today.

Officer—"Yer honor, this chauffeur ran his car into th' show windy av a millinery store!"
Judge—"What millinery store?"
Officer—"Madame De Stilskumm's."
Judge—"Discharged! That's where my wife buys her hats!"

Helpful.

Flatbush—"A reason why there is so much rascality in the world is because so many men are willing to help a rascal out of a scrape."
Bensonhurst—"Perhaps; but I'm willing to help a rascal into a scrape."

A Succession Spurned.

"Chatters is a perfect little gentleman. He never sells his clothes and never gets into mischief."
"Oh, bah."
"Why don't you behave as he does, Tommy?"
"Aw! he called 'em 'garments' I s'pose, an' guess not!"

After Marriage.

"Many fashionable tournaments come after marriage. My taste used to be fond of carving my initials on a tree."
"And now?"
"He—He'd carve a steak."

Very Bad Management.

He had been showing his rich old cousin the country some of the sights, and this evening they were to witness a revue.
He was keen on making a good impression, as he had great expectations from the old lady. So he was quite surprised when, as soon as the curtain rose, the good dame grasped him by the arm and hurried him from the theater.
"Disgraceful! Such bad management! If it is one of the kind to be met with in a city like this, I'm sure it is not a place for you or me to be seen in. Come, let those poor girls were dressed."

Loath to Part.

"Sir, no matter how long you argue, you will not be able to convince me that you are right and I am wrong."
"Madam, I never entertained any such idea. But don't get away just now. Can't you see I'm enjoying myself?"

Will It Ever Come?

"Sure, Mike, and what are they fightin' for in Europe?"
"Why, they're fightin' for peace, of course."

Literal Description.

"Monday is a fine day for motoring."
"Why? Monday generally rains."
"Because then the Sunday speeders pay up."

Chilly in Fact.

Singleton—"Didn't you find it pretty cool last night out your way?"
Wellington—"No. I arrived home late and got a very cool reception."

THE SUPERCLOCK.

I do not fear the ticking clock
The shrieking one does me no harm;
But oh, I dread the brutal shock
Of the demoniac alarm!

MYSTERIOUS.

Oh, gasoline! Oh, gasoline!
How oft you toy with fate!
Sometimes you play along normal,
Sometimes you conflagrate.

We know not, when you hit the road,
What's going to befall.
Tho violently you explode,
Or don't explode at all.

We watch you with a weary frown,
And hope as an anxious sigh,
Your price goes up, your price goes down,
Why this is funny!
We don't know how or why!

Quite Safe.

"My friend," said the reformer to the youth who was smoking a cigarette, "do you realize that you are courting destruction?"
"Whaddy yer mean?"
"Why, that cigarette."
"G'wan. There ain't no gunpowder around here that I know of an' I'm from a party that runs the nearest gasoline tunk."

Old Man Longbrush—"Of all the silly stips than come into my office, you're one!"
Miss Instyle—"It might be worse if we were them on our knees as some men do."

Sounds That Way.

Miss Gush—"Do you remember my sister who was on the stage?"
Prudence—"Oh, yes!"
—"Well, she's married."
—"Why, she's got a leading part at last, has she?"

Unreasonable Assumption.

"Does Gabbid write Society Topics?"
"I don't believe it. No violinist would permit a prestidigitator to display on the same program with himself."

A Beach Nut.

Click—"Gray is crazy about watching women in bathing suits."
Clack—"Yes, he is a regular beach nut."

A Chronic Shopper.

"My wife shops every day."
"Surely rain keeps her in occasionally."
"Yes. Then she shops by telephone."

Well Qualified.

Recruiting officer—"Any previous training?"
Billkins—"My oath! Yorter see me kotlin' pigs."

A Critical Pale.

"I intended to call Bridget to bring a fresh bucket of water," remarked the professor's wife.
"You doubtless mean a bucket of fresh water," corrected the professor. "I wish you would pay some little attention to your rhetoric; your mistakes are curious."
A few moments later the professor said: "By the way, that picture would show to better advantage if you were to hang it over the clock."
"Ah," she replied, quietly, "you doubtless think if I were to hang it above the clock. If I were to hang it over the clock we could not tell the time."

His Fever.

Three friends had been staying rather late in the village inn, and presently began to wend their unsteady steps thro the dark night homeward.
Suddenly they espied a tent bridge which spanned a small but deep ravine. And one of the jovial trio missed his way and fell into the hollow.
He lay silent and still, and his scared friends called down and got anxiously over him. As they began a faltering explanation as to his injuries he said in husky tones:
"For goodness sake, strike a match! I think I'm unconscious."

An Ordinary Place.

Mr. Swankley had been a great traveler, and he was fond of telling of the countries he had visited. Everything that happened reminded him of something else that took place in Timbuctoo or the Cannibal isles.
His friend Martin was admiring a very beautiful signet one evening.
"Ah," said Swankley, "you should just see the sunset in the East!"
"I should like to very much," said Martin. "The sun always sets in the west in this ordinary old country."

Photographer—"Try and look pleasant, please."
Mr. Clinton—"Um, not! This picture is for some relatives who expect to come and spend a month with me."

A Great Comfort.

"I shouldn't call this a desirable flat," said the lady who was looking for a home over the telephone. "I shouldn't like to live in a shoe, next door."
"That's just the point," replied the agent, pointing. "Think what a comfort it will be to know that your husband is never far from home!"

Fish Eater.

An American visiting in Ireland was much interested in the fishers' nets there. Turning to one of the keepers the American asked, pointing:
"What's them things in the nets?"
"He has no mate, sor," responded Pat, "We just feed him on fish all the time."

SURE ENOUGH EVIDENCE

Silas Crabtree—"More melons swiped! Who is the pesky thief, anyhow? There's only one way to find out, and that's by the finger print system.

"I'll just photograph this thumb print, and with that for a clew I'll get the darned thief! Funny I never thought of that before!

"Ah, hah! Sam Jackson's thumb print, or I'm a politan. I thought it must be he. I'll enlarge this now and confront him with the evidence!"

Sam Jackson—"So yo' melons was stole, huh? Dat am very strange, ah' might I inquire who yo' scrapshaun?"

Crabtree—"I suspect you are the low-down melon grabber, and here's the incident of your guilt taken right from the melon patch!"

Jackson—"Yo' sure seem to have de goods on me, Mistah Crabtree, but would yo' mind tellin' me where yo' got dat print ob my corduroy pants?"

HER STRANGE CONFESSION

Or, Making Good

By Constance Beatrice Willard

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CHAPTER IX.

THE new city editor of the Advocate sat with his elbows on his desk, his hands in his hair. His work for the day was done and he was free to leave, and yet he lingered amid the surroundings he used to love, tho, tinged as they now were with the terrible sorrow that was to shape his hated them.

Altho less than ten days had elapsed since his assumption of his duties, Kurston had wrought a revolution in the office.

"Go it a little slow," his chief told him more than once. "We're not asking superhuman efforts," but it was only while plunged beyond his depth in work that Kurston could find relief from the fear that was taking complete possession of him. He never looked over proofs from his police reporters that his heart did not stand still. He was always on edge at the "flimsies" for fear he would see in them something that would point to his wife as the murderer of Mrs. Dick.

More than once Prouty had strolled in to see him, and altho he knew that it was but Bob's friendship for him, he felt a nervousness that almost overpowered him whenever the detective came in sight. In fact, so apparent did this nervousness become that Prouty felt he was not welcome, and was deeply hurt, for he regarded Kurston as his best friend, and he told Jim in confidence:

"Ain't it strange how some folks are spoiled by good fortune? Take Dick. Now I'd have sworn nothing would make him go back on a pal, but—"

And here he waved his head and Jim nodded. He had himself experienced just such changes of heart in those he had thought his friends, when good fortune smiled on them.

The men under Kurston cursed the day that he had been placed in charge, instead of old easy-going Evans, who never did care much what kind of a paper came out, just so he was not hurried.

"It's fierce," they told each other, as the new editor hustled them, had them on the "carpet" on every occasion, and made his authority felt in a very disagreeable way, and yet Kurston was one of the best-liked men on the staff, for while he would have been very considerate of his subordinates, but now he knew that it was only by keeping busy that he could save his reason, and keep his nerves under some kind of control.

"If she were only a darling!" he would groan to himself.

Rose had shown what a truly good woman she was, and proved her greatness as a model wife. She had always been noted for her sunny disposition, her gentle sweetness of character, and her high moral tone, but well as he had known her, the true depth of her rare goodness and purity did not strike her husband until they were married and were drawn all the closer to each other through the future.

"If she were right now to save her!" he groaned that evening as he sat at his desk.

He had been examining some cuts which had been finished too late for that day's editions, but were to go in the next day's. They were of a woman figuring in a sensational case then in progress, and the realization of the way Rose would be made to appear if the police came out nearly drove him mad.

Time passed, and still he did not move, and his chief, Evans, was struck by the dejected attitude of the young man, and coming up, laid a kindly hand upon his shoulder. Elbert Evans had always liked Kurston, and had been delighted when he received orders to promote him, for aside from his evident ability as a newspaper man, he believed him the best man in all the staff.

As he touched him, Kurston, with an exclamation, jumped to his feet, and stood glaring at Evans, seeing who it was, he muttered an excuse and sank back in his chair. Lincoln drew up another, and said kindly, trying to get in touch with him:

"See here, Dick, I want to have a talk with you."

"All right, fire ahead," Kurston replied, digging his hands in his pockets and tilting back his chair in a comfortable position.

"You're going it too strong, lad. Put on the brakes. Of course I know that you are crazy to make good, and I know especially Mrs. Kurston, your mettle, but your nerves are showing the strain. You don't want to be carried into the houses, and that's what will be yours, if you go on in this way," he added in a more kindly, friendly fashion Kurston knew so well.

Altho his nerves were almost shattered, Dick knew and appreciated the truth of his superior's remarks, and he said very simply:

"I know, Lincoln, you're right, but something is driving me, and I can't help it."

"What is it? Can I help?" asked the elder man.

Suddenly Dick was shaken with the fear that his nervousness might react on his wife, and so he summoned a lightness of spirit he did not feel, and said:

"It's simple enough, old man. A fellow who marries a rich woman, when he's nothing, must show that there is something worth while about him. I don't want my wife to be ashamed of me."

"Small fear of that!" Lincoln returned kindly. "I am proud of the fact that there are some people left who can recognize true worth, and are not blinded by the glitter of a coronet."

Kurston smiled a little wanly. He remembered the agony he had endured when the English lord had been so attentive to Rose, and when one day when he had been sent to "cover" an entertainment given at the Barracks, that seemed painted hell, Lord Abarthanal had been her shadow, and had delivered an address to the crowd gathered from the slums. He had wanted to scoff, but had to admit that the nobleman acquitted himself very well, and he wondered if Rose could resist so well-built a man, so perfect a gentleman, and one who possessed a title a thousand years old. She had resisted, and he knew that this nobleman was not likely to marry for years, if ever, on account of the love Rose Vandeville had awakened in his heart.

"Yes, sir," Lincoln continued, "Mrs. Kurston has made Americans proud of her. She did not hesitate to follow her heart, and you are worthy of her in every respect."

"Don't!" and Kurston threw out his hand.

Worthy of her! He only wished he was, for in spite of what she had confessed, Dick believed her to be at heart the best and noblest of women, and feeling that he had satisfactorily explained the crime, thought all the more of her for that impulsive desire to defend her father. It was only that he dreaded the possible consequence for her of the rash deed.

"Yes, you are," Lincoln insisted. "Why not? You come of a fine family. You are a good worker, and before you finish you are going to stand high in your chosen profession. You are making good in every way. You are a clean, decent young fellow, and nature has been pretty good to you, and has given a strong constitution and a little more than your rightful share of good looks. What is it you want, a million dollars, of which she has a surplus. I tell you, you two are an ideal married couple, and deserve the thanks of all loyal Americans for proving that true love is not dead, and that worth counts here above all else."

Kurston wondered if he would say the same if the truth ever came out, but he smiled, shook hands, and thanking him, promised to try to moderate his zeal, then somewhat wearily he put on his street coat and started home.

Rose wanted to take him down and call for him in her magnificent car, one she had bought shortly before their marriage, but Kurston knew that this would excite unpleasant comment, and so made his way to and fro by the subway.

As he started to enter the station, Prouty hailed him, and he stopped, his head in a whirl, and waited for his partner to make him wonder if there was anything serious the matter with its action.

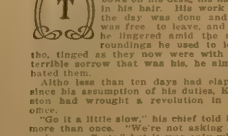
"I want to ask you something, Dick," Prouty said, but without his old cordial manner, and this struck Kurston like a blow.

"Well?" he asked, glancing at his paper.

"See here, drop that superior air with me!" cried the detective. "I'm ashamed of you, Dick Kurston. You and I were like brothers, and now that you've married a rich girl, you've got the swell head so no one can associate with you."

Kurston stared at him. "Me?" he asked stupidly, with a fine disregard of grammar.

"Yes, you! It used to be I could get a chin with you any old time, but now it's



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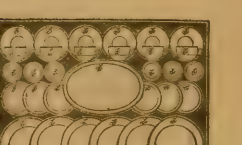
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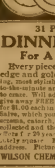
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different. You'd think I was some mutt of a roundsman, instead of being—"

"The best gum-shoe man on the force," Kurston said heartily, grasping the hand of the detective. He felt so glad to see that there was no knowledge of Rose that had tinged his manner. "You're all wrong, old pal. Buck up, old man, and don't think I've gone back on you until you have strong proofs. I've been up to my eyes in work, that's all, and this made Prouty feel as tho he had been made chief of the force.

"That's the best news I've heard in a month of Sundays!" he cried. "I couldn't be more glad if I had unearthed the Herrick murderer."

Poor Kurston hoped that Prouty did not notice his start. The detective did not, but continued:

"I've wanted to have a long talk with you over it and get your ideas."

"Why?"

"Why? Because, son, I've brought all my troubles to you ever since you helped me on that counterfeiting business, three years ago."

"How are things going on this new case?" Kurston asked a little heavily.

"Punk. I'm up against a brick wall," the detective confessed, and Kurston hoped his joy was not betrayed in his face.

"Too bad," he said sympathetically, "but I tell you, old man, I'm late now, and Mrs. Kurston will be expecting me. Come in tomorrow early, say nine, and we'll go over the whole matter, and I'll see what my brains will produce for you," and he resolved to steer the fellow off on as false a scent he would never discover the right one.

"And there's no danger of my getting another North Pole discovery frost, is there, when I blow in"

"You can just bet not," was the hearty response, and then they parted, Kurston to go home with a lighter heart than he had carried since Rose had made her extraordinary confession.

CHAPTER X.

AND so, Miss Vandeville, this is your pet, is it?" and the speaker raised her lorgnette and surveyed the interior of the Barracks as tho it were something so new that it was worthy of prolonged inspection.

"Mrs. Kurston." Rose corrected prompt-ly.

"To be sure," grinned Mrs. Post, wife of a member of the upper house of the State Assembly, given to writing herself The Honorable Mrs. Jarvis C. Post. "It's so hard to think of you as separated from your name."

"It is not necessary to do so, I never deny it; in fact, I am proud of it," Rose said quietly.

During the days following her return she often wondered if she had become Lady Aarnhanal, whether people would have persisted in forgetting she had changed her name.

"But you have just done so," Mrs. Post persisted.

"No," Rose smiled, "I have only corrected you. My name is no longer Miss Vandeville, but Mrs. Kurston."

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Post drawled. "How quaint you are!"

Rose bit her lip. She wanted to turn and leave the visitor, overdressed woman, but her influence was needed to secure some State legislation for settlement houses, and already devoted to her work, Rose put aside personal feelings, and gravely led Mrs. Post thru the establishment, pointing out the various features, and trying to impress upon her the necessity for improved conditions and new laws.

"We can do much for these poor people, but are sadly hampered," she explained.

"But why do you want to help them? They are just lazy. That is the reason they haven't something!" Mrs. Post exclaimed.

Rose shook her head. She was used to such statements.

"My dear Mrs. Post, we who have never suffered from want can never know how terrible it is to be unfortunate. It is not laziness, except in a few isolated cases, that brings people to want and despair."

"What then?" Mrs. Post said, pressing a bottle of smelling salts to her nose in a rather ostentatious way, tho the place was spotlessly clean, and the people in it equally so, for one of the first requirements of those who entered was a bath and thoro cleanliness of their clothes.

"There are many causes. It is very easy for any one to say they should work, but, my dear lady, how can they when there is not enough work to go round? These people are nearly all of them unskilled laborers. When machinery labor gives out, they cannot get employment. Where a few years ago thousands hired women to do their washing, there are only hundreds now. The people in moderate circumstances are sending their clothes to laundries. These washwomen cannot get work in the laundries; there skilled labor is employed, and machines do the work of many."

"Yes," Mrs. Post yawned. Washwomen did not interest her.

"Then plain sewing is almost a thing of the past. The readymade garments are being bought, and these are made on machines, even the buttons in many cases being sewed on in that way. It is the same in every line of work. The day of the unskilled laborer is past."

"How are you going to help matters?" Mrs. Post asked, not that she was interested, but just to continue the conversation.

Altho she had tried to annoy Rose, and was not even being polite enough to show a proper interest, she was proud of the fact that the sister of the great Kirby Vandeville was giving her individual attention, and Rose felt a relief at this, hoping it led to influence the purse-proud woman, and thru her to get her husband to do something for she and others of her kind were planning to present to the State Legislature

"We are endeavoring to train both men and women for useful, skilled labor. As soon as we discover their bent, we try and train them along that line, and thus far the results have been encouraging."

Again Mrs. Post yawned, but Rose kept on.

"Our cooking class has been a great success. We do not try to teach them anything fancy. The kitchen in which we give the lessons has modern and convenient appliances, would have at home, and none that they cannot easily obtain. There they are taught good, wholesome meals with ordinary materials. Did you ever think how many toothsome dishes can be made from potatoes, for instance?" Rose asked, smiling.

Way back in the early history of her married life, before Mr. Post had become a ward leader, and was just a ward heeler, Mrs. Post had learned that when potatoes had been the sole article of food of many a meal, but she saw fit to forget this, as many of her friends were, so she replied with the utmost disdain:

"I never gave the matter a single thought." And Rose had impressed itself.

She had, but not in the way she thought. Looking at the unintelligent face, Rose felt that there was not much use in trying to melt ice. So she left the subject of the cooking class, and made one further effort.

"I am going to ask you to a department not open to every on- and-led the way down a side hall.

She had suddenly remembered that the tragedy of Mrs. Post's life was that she had never had any children. There was a half-forgotten story that her child once expected a little one, but that a drunken brawl of her husband's had blighted her hopes and resulted in an injury from which she had never fully recovered.

"And what is it?" Mrs. Post asked.

"I am taking you with the distinct understanding that you will not hurt the feelings of the inmates of this room,' Rose warned, then opened the door and stood within, motioning Mrs. Post to follow her.

The guest gasped, as her eyes roved about the room; then Rose saw her face quiver.

There were half a hundred women sitting in the cheery, well-heated room, and all were sewing. Mrs. Post's eyes riveted upon the little garments they were making, and her heart swelled within her bosom. She recalled her own efforts upon garments just as tiny, that were never needed.

"Good morning," Rose said to the women, and they all looked up, their faces shining in welcome.

"And how's the work getting on?" she asked in her pleasant way, and a perfect chatter answered her.

Little garments were held up for her inspection ooh'ed was given, and she was soon in the midst of a lively throng, but she kept her attention on Mrs. Post. At first the latter stood aside, then with hands shaking she drew near one girl a beautiful little thing, with soft dark eyes, a rosebud face, and drooping

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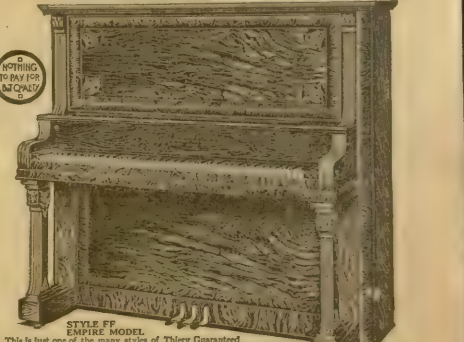

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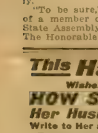

For over 20 years James Anderson of 30 Oak Ave., Hilburn, N. Y., was a very hard drinker. His case seemed hopeless one, but 10 years ago his wife, by their own little home, gave him a simple remedy that much to her delight stopped his drinking entirely.

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Classified Want Ad Information

The rate for one insertion in Chicago Ledger and one insertion in The Saturday Blade is 30 cents a word, minimum 14 words, less 3% for cash. Each initial and group of figures is counted as a word, and the name and address are also counted. This is the minimum rate; neither more nor less is charged, irrespective of size of ad or number of insertions. An ad may appear in both publications of the same week, or in the Blade of one week and the Ledger of the next

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UNLIMITED SALES ON THIS PATENTED Renovator. Every woman wants Disinfected Rugs, wants them made double wear from rugs. Cleansed and disinfected rugs require no work, sweep or broom. Last twice as long and look like new. Renovator does it all. Sells for $2.50. Agents $2.50. Half profit. Life job. Samples loaned. Factory Manager, 104-22nd St., Milwaukee, Wis.

BIG TEXTILE MILLS WANT AMBITIOUS men and women everywhere to show latest dress fabrics, neckwear, hosiery, underwear, and sweaters. 400 styles. Many sales where others stores. Many making over $30 weekly. All or spare time. Complete sample outfit starts you. Stendfast Mills, 18 Remsen St., Cohoes, N. Y.

SOAP AGENTS MAKE MORE MONEY SELLing Linro Products. Coffee, Flavorings, Spices, Teas, Perfumes and Toilet Goods. Big commission. Exclusive territory. Freight allowed. Experience unnecessary. Capital required. Write for catalog today. Linro Company, 98 Linro Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

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AGENTS—HERE'S THE BIGGEST MONEY in food flavors, perfumes, soaps, toilet preparations, etc., ever offered. Quick repeaters. Established free to workers. Write today for full particulars. Quality Chemical Laboratories, 3rd St., Cincinnati, Ohio.

U. S. GOVERNMENT USES RICHMOND Chemical Automobiles to put all goods on fires. District managers make 500% profit. Write free booklet. Richmond Chemical Co., Wheeling, W. Va.

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SUIT $3.75, PANTS $1.00, MADE TO measure. For even a better offer than this write quick for free sample outfit. Address Knickerbocker Tailoring Co., Dept. 514, Chicago.

$150.00 SALARY FOR 60 DAYS' WORK $ paid woman or man in each town to distribute free circulars, tack signs, etc. Write Hilson Concentrated Flavoring, J. S. Ziegler Co., 72 E. Adams St., Chicago, Ill.

LARGE MANUFACTURER WANTS REPREsentatives to sell shirts, underwear, hosiery, dresses, suits, skirts, waists, raincoats, etc. for free samples. Madison Mills, 546 Broadway, New York City.

AGENTS SELL CALIFORNIA ROSEBRANDS. Swell Lapel Emblems. Large profits. Catalog free. Mission Bead Company, 24925 Main, Los Angeles, Cal.

AGENTS—SELL RELIABLE CUSTOM MADE raincoats. Big commission. Complete sample line free. Tremont Raincoat Co., Dept. 61, Templeton, Mass.

AGENTS—I'VE A NEW SOAP GAME that's a dandy. New stuff; 100% profits. Sample and full layout free. Write quick. Lancaster, Dept. 1, 1215 S. Grand, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS: TWO BIG SELLING HOUSEHOLD necessities. Sell at sight. Repeat orders quick. G. A. Landwehr, Desk 17, Majestic Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind.

WELLER'S TOILET PREPARATIONS, 7358 West 43rd Street, Chicago. Terms free.

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MEN, WOMEN WANTED EVERYWHERE. U. S. Government Jobs. $15.00 to $150.00 month. Vacations. Common education sufficient. Write immediately for free list of positions now obtainable. Franklin Institute, Dept. O 59, Rochester, N. Y.

WANTED—MEN AND WOMEN, 18 OR over, to Government Railway Mail Clerks, City Carriers—Clerks at Washington, $1,200 to $2,000 a year. Write for list of positions obtainable. Franklin Institute, Dept. F 59, Rochester, N. Y.

LADY OR GENTLEMAN TO TRAVEL FOR old-established firm. No canvassing. Staple line sold weekly, guaranteed to contract. Expenses advanced. G. K. Nichols, Philadelphia, Penn. Trust Bldg.

EVERY READER OF THE LEDGER OUGHT to read these ads. Every week splendid chances to make money better than ever—to buy, sell or exchange goods or services, are offered here.

MEN—BECOME CHAUFFEURS. $25 WEEK. Learn while earning. Sample lessons free. Franklin Institute, Dept. O 210, Rochester, N. Y.

STENOGRAPHERS—TO WRITE MOVING picture plays at home, all or spare time. Atlas Publishing Co., 144, Cincinnati.

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HELP WANTED—(Continued)

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FOR SALE

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PROFITABLE LITTLE FARMS IN VALLEY and hill lands, $10 and up acres tracts, $250 and up. Good fruit and farming country, land for literature see P. H. LaBaume, Agr. Agt., N. & W. Ry., 248 Arcade Bldg., Roanoke, Virginia

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FARMS WANTED— HAVE 7,000 BUYERS; describe your unsold property. 604 Farmers Exchange, Denver, Colo.

FARM LANDS

CALIFORNIA LAND $1.00 PER ACRE CASH. Balance entire purchase—90 cents month per acre. Immediate possession given. No taxes. No interest. Level San Joaquin Valley. Only four hours from San Francisco. 5 acres up. Clear; ready to plow; no pumping; open ditch irrigation. $100 crop per annum. Particulars, maps, photographs, free. Stevinson Colony, 748 Rialto Bldg., San Francisco.

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$35.00 PROFIT NIGHTLY. SMALL CAPITAL starts you in moving picture show. Our machines are used and endorsed by Government. Illustrated Catalog Free. Atlas Moving Picture Co., Franklin Bldg., Chicago.

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WRITE PHOTOPLAYS, SHORT STORIES, $ poems; $100 each. Correspondence course. Details free. Atlas Publishing Co., 144, Cincinnati.

WRITE PHOTOPLAYS; $25-$300 PAID. EXperience unnecessary; details free to new writers. Authors' Producers' Bureau, Los Angeles.

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INVEST — MAY MAKE FORTUNE! Millions being made by fortunate investors in Texas oil properties. Single wells have produced upward of $15,000.00 daily. Production absolutely guaranteed. Small monthly payments secure big interest with us in valuable oil leases on which we plan to drill many wells. Write quick. Offer limited. Great Southern Oil Association, 1300 Carter Building, Houston, Texas.

$10 INVESTED—PROFITS $300 FROM OIL Wells. Unusually interesting letter in Humble Field where gusher wells pay thousands monthly, we have leases where we want to drill ten wells. Drilling operations have started. Limited number of shares $10, payments $1 monthly if desired. Write for co-operative plan. Houston Oil Fields Association, 1128 Carter Building, Houston, Texas.

DIVIDEND NO. 1 PAYABLE THIS MONTH to all members of the Mutual Investment Company. Outstanding features make absolute ownership to 320 gold and oil shares of limited value. Further dividends will be paid. A few memberships at $10 each are now still available. Write today. The Claude Sachs Investment Company, capitalized five million, 1207 Carter Bldg., Houston, Texas.

$15 INVESTED MAY MAKE $1,000 YEARLY. Gets Warranty Deed, also interest in Co-operative oil well now getting ready to drill in big gusher oil territory. $1 cash, $1 weekly. Limited to 1,000 shares at rather low price, which may be soon. Particulars free. Triangle Oil Company, 607 Carter Bldg., Houston, Texas.

$1 PER—THE WESTERN MINER, 3 MONTHS for 1 to get acquainted. Devoted to News and Opportunity. 2346 W. 37 Ave., Denver, Colo.

SHORT STORIES WANTED

WRITERS!—STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, etc., are wanted for publication. Literary Bureau 24, Hannibal, Mo.

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INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED ON CASH and royalty basis. Inventors and manufacturers write at once. Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 2644 Railway Exchange, St. Louis, Mo.

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BEST QUALITY NEW CLOVER HONEY. 30 lb. can $2.66; two or more cans, $2.45 each. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Sample 10 cts. Price list free. M. V. Facey, Preston, Minn.

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SONG POEMS WANTED—FOR BEST OFFER submit manuscript to Needham Music Co., D-44, St. Louis, Mo.

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BIG NEW LIST OF USED MOTORCYCLES, the best bargains we have ever offered. Over one hundred splendid machines, all makes, all guaranteed, specially priced from $30.00 up. Write today for your copy—means money saved. Western Supplies Co., 2448 Larimer St., Denver, Colo.

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SEND FOR FREE COPY OF OUR TRAPpers' Guide and particulars of our Free Gift to Trappers. Hill Bros. Fur Co., 458 N. Main St., St. Louis, Mo.

PATENTS

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE RETURNED. Actual search and patentability report free. Send sketch or model for examination or model of your invention. My patent sales service gets full value. 1916 Free List. Ninety-page patent book free. George P. Kimmel, 260 Barrister Building, Washington, D. C.

"PATENTS AND PATENT POSSIBILITIES," is a 72-page treatise telling what to invent and how to sell it. Manufacturers constantly writing for patents. Help supply the demand. Send 6c in stamps. H. E. Hill, 233 Richester Building, Washington, D. C.

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CASH OR PREMIUMS GIVEN FOR ALL kinds tobacco and cigarette coupons; United Profit Sharing Coupons; certificates, soap wrappers, silk and tobacco tags; retailer's store certificates; expired coupon books. Premium list free. Redemption agency, 32 La Salle St., National Coupon Exchange, 60 Newark St., Hoboken, N. J.

WANTED TO BUY

CASH PAID FOR FALSE TEETH, FULL sets, broken pieces, or any condition. Mail to D. Hoke, Chicago, Ill.

PERSONAL

GET MARRIED QUICK. BEFORE YOU marry, write for our Free Matrimonial Paper, large selection of ladies and gentlemen, many wealthy, anxious to marry. Suit your self by corresponding with opposite sex, all parts of country. Write today. Mention your age and address. Free copy. Parisian Novelty Co., Dept. 1, Kansas City, Mo.

THE PEOPLE'S COMMON SENSE MEDICAL Adviser, containing 1,000 pages of valuable information; 1,000 illustrations; 1,000 of the Human System, etc., over 2,000,000 copies sold. Thousands of testimonials. Every home should have one. Sent postpaid $1.50, or send for free table of contents. Geo. W. Beadman & Son, Publishers, 177 East 34th St., New York.

PERSONAL—WANTED QUICK—NAME AND address of reliable single man who would marry wealthy lady who could assist him financially. If no object to you write quick for more particulars. Address Allen Manufacturing Co., Dept. 1, Toledo, Ohio.

WEAK, NERVOUS, RUN DOWN MEN; REmember we Cure chronic, nervous, blood, skin, kidney and bladder troubles. Drains, symptom blank and advice free, sealed. Dr. Meyer, 1535 Lawrence Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.

MARRY RICH. BE HAPPY AND PROSPER—descriptions and photos of hundreds of congenial people with means free. Sealed, confidential. Either sex. Standard Club, Box 607, Grand Crossing, Ill.

MARRY—FREE PHOTOS, BEAUTIFUL list, large descriptions, directory, pay when married. New Plan Co., Dept. 21, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY—MARRIAGE DIRECTORY WITH photos and description free. Pay when married. The Exchange, Dept. 21, Kansas City, Mo.

CALLOUSES REMOVED ABSOLUTELY. Never fails. Money back guarantees. Send 15c in stamps or coin for trial tube. K. W. B. Co., 14 Ann St., Dept. 1, New York, N. Y.

MEN, IF NERVOUS, WEAK, RUN DOWN, lack vitality, failing memory, or fear gray hair, use the wonderful upbuilding tonic. "Manhood Restored." Sent free. Write me today. Dr. Ward, 2345 N. 31st St., Milwaukee, Wis.

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LONELY, LONELY, HUNDREDS RICH with marriage; strictly confidential; descriptions free. "The Successful Club," Box 656, Oakland, Calif.

MARRY—MARRIAGE CLUB HAS WORLD wide membership. Descriptions free; may when married. Langdon, 424 S. Williams, Dayton, Ohio.

MARRY, JOIN THE LARGEST, MOST PROgressive club. $1.00 pays year's subscription. Best class; advertisements. Chicago Correspondence Club, Box 247, Chicago, Ill.

MARRIAGE PAPER—HIGHEST CHARACter; sealed; send 10c. B. W. Love, Box 1616, Denver, Colo.

OLDEST, LARGEST CLUB, 80,000 MEMbers, free. Mrs. Wrubel, Box 26, Oakland, Calif.

SIXTH AND SEVENTH BOOKS MOSES, Egyptian secrets—interesting book. 20 cents postpaid. Bell & Co., Camden, N. J.

MARRY—WOULD YOU MARRY A NICE girl worth $10,000? Mrs. Wm. Warn, 248 M, Coronado Av., Los Angeles, Cal.

MARRIAGE PAPER FREE; BEST PUBlication for sure results; reliable. Eastern Agency, Bridgeton, N. J.

CORRESPOND DIRECT WITH MATRIMOnially inclined ladies. Big list. Mason, Box 1, Bond, Ill.

GET MARRIED—BEST MATRIMONIAL PAper published. Mailed Free. The Correspondent, Joplin, Missouri.

MARRY—BIG PAPER WITH ALL NAMES, addresses and photos, 25c. Box 3765 P, Boston, Mass.

Her Strange Confession.

(Continued From Page 12.)

shoulders. She was bending over a bit of sewing, which her little fingers seemed too small to manage. She had not asked any questions of Rose, but had thanked her a look of love and devotion, and received an equally tender one in return.

"What are you making?" Mrs. Post asked, noticing as she did so that there was no wedding ring on the little left hand.

"A dress," the girl returned, speaking with a distinct Polish accent, but not illiterately.

Mrs. Post took the little garment in her hands. For her surprise she saw that the work was remarkably dainty, that the garment was fit for any child no matter what its station in life. She gave an exquisite needlewoman. If her condition had not betrayed that she would soon need it for her own, Mrs. Post would have thought she was making it for another.

"It is for a christening robe," the girl said softly. "If it is a girl, I will name her for my good saint," and she looked toward Rose and again the same look of devotion crept into her lovely eyes.

Rose did not allow Mrs. Post to remain long in the room, being fully aware that it may something to offend, but she had no need to fear, for the woman's face was working, her lips trembling, as she sank into the first chair that she saw after leaving the sewing women.

"What a wonderful work," she said softly, and Rose knew that she had gained her ends, and that the new bills would be properly presented.

"I hope so," she said simply. "All the prospective mothers are encouraged to come here. We furnish them with material and show them how to make their little clothes."

"All are not married?" Mrs. Post asked.

"Not more than half," Rose said sadly, "and that is the sorrow part of it. We also try to help them to learn how to be good mothers. It is hard enough to come into the world under the condition of the law and the church, without being forced to go naked for weeks. I know of cases where the mother may have had no clothes save a dirty rag for weeks," and Rose sighed.

Those words really knew her appreciated the fact that she spent infinitely more on this settlement house than she did on herself, and that every penny she possessed would have been spent long before. "I wish there were more," she said.

"It's a wonderful work!" Mrs. Post cried, and then, with tears streaming down her face, she told Rose of her own blighted motherhood, and tears flowed down the younger woman's face as she listened.

After the two had recovered somewhat from their emotions, Mrs. Post asked about the beautiful home, and Rose sighed deeply as she returned:

"You mean Tiny? Yes, hers is a very sad case. Poor little neglected thing."

"Can't he be made to marry her?" Mrs. Post asked, and Rose shook her head.

"Divorce!" Mrs. Post cried.

"Yes, it is an old story, and one only too common, here. The young girl, ignorant, penniless, is made such a victim. Tiny is better educated than the average. She was maid to a lady of high rank in St. Petersburg, where she became involved in some political plot and was forced to leave."

"That accounts for her beautiful needlework," Mrs. Post exclaimed.

Rose assented.

"I think she will I can give her a lot to do." Mrs. Post promised, and Rose thanked her.

"Do you need any money for her?" Mrs Post asked. "She reminds me of a sister who died when she was a little thing, and I can't bear to think of her suffering for anything."

"She won't suffer," Rose promised. "I am looking after her," and Mrs. Post felt sure that the girl with the sad face had ample reason for her devotion to her benefactress.

During the short time she had been under Rose's influence Mrs. Post had experienced what was almost a change of heart. She had entered determined to reap all the benefit possible in a social way, and left forgetting all her aspirations, only remembering the infinite tenderness of Rose Kurston. She handed Rose a very substantial check, asking that it be used to supply materials for expectant mothers, and promised an equally large one annually.

"And if you need anything, Mrs. Kurston, don't hesitate to call upon me. Yes, and you can count on Mr. Post's support of those bills. If he don't put them thru I will make life one long nightmare for him," and Rose knew that the influence her over Senator Post might have imposed on his wife in the early days, she had the upper hand now.

Having accomplished so much, Rose left to meet her husband on the steps of the Vanderbilt mansion, for she longed to see that his face was brighter, for he had just come from his interview with Prouty, and he was much from their prospective talk the following day.

CHAPTER XI.

BRADLEY GRAVES set his teeth in his lower lip and wished that the days of dueling had not gone by. Had he lived a century sooner, he certainly would have sent a challenge to the broad-shouldered young man upon whose arm Rose Kurston was leaning so proudly as the two passed down the long room at a reception given by a mutual friend. One of Rose's friends, the evening of the day when she had entertained Mrs. Post at the Barrocks.

Both Rose and Richard looked happy and at peace, and the latter felt that a portorial training was valuable to him, since his marriage, for it enabled him to greet the man who had been his companion ances with a calm front, tho if it had not been for the carking anxiety which was ever present, he would not have allowed their opinion about the marriage to cause him the slightest annoyance. He knew, if ever a man did, that nothing could matter what feelings might have been at the time of their marriage, his wife now loved him with all her impulsive, tender heart, and he realized that to inspire such love he must possess qualities that helped to make him worthy of her. As for her money, he put the thought of it behind him. He had married Rose, not that he loved her for herself, and that she knew it. As it was, sometimes knowing what he did, he had to restrain a care-free as he did this night, but he accomplished the feat, and his apparent happiness and evident tenderness of feelings in Bradley Graves' heart.

The married lovers remained but a short time, just long enough to show their appreciation of the honor done them, and then left, rolling away in the handsomely appointed Kurston car. Graves had once hoped to sit in it by Rose's side as Kurston was now doing, and this in addition to the fact that he had loved her in his hard, cold way made him furious. As he saw them off, he turned with a face to a keen observer no one he thought might help him in revenging himself upon Rose and her husband. Finding her, he walked up to her and said coldly:

"I have come for my dance."

Lola Livingstone looked up at him and laughed softly. He had no dances with her, but she raised no objection, and let him lead her to a cozy corner at the end of the upper hall, designed for uninterrupted love-making, tho he had no idea of making love to her; he had more serious matter on hand. When she turned inquiringly toward him, he blurted out:

"Lola, why do you hate Rose?"

Mrs. Livingstone shrugged her shoulders, which rose and fell voluptuously, matching her tawny hair, and said coldly:

"For some of the reasons women always hate each other. She is better looking, has more money, and is really a much nicer person.

"Nonsense, that isn't it!" Graves declared rudely. "There's something back of it all. What is it?"

"Really, Mrs. Livingstone laughed, "you amaze me."

"No, I don't. Lola Livingstone, nothing ever does. Be frankly honest for once in your life. You are handsome enough to make men mad with love for you. You have about all the money you can conveniently spend, and as for goodness—I don't think you are losing much sleep about that."

"I wonder if that is all you dragged me off here for," Mrs. Livingstone said complainingly. "Just to ask me why I don't like a certain woman. Bless the man! He's love and hate, we women resort to tricks to trifles like those I have mentioned. We hate or love, and that's all there is to it, and she waved her fan provokingly. "If it had been any other man, I would have thought you wanted to make love to me, but I know you better than that," and her laugh was an easy one.

Graves laughed himself, but a little bitterly. "You're dead right there, Lola. I can stand a good deal in a woman, but you are the limit."

The lady still waved her fan. "For that I ought to cut you dead," she said tranquilly, "but it is a novelty to find a man who does not try to prove to me that I am the 'only woman,'" and she yawned dutifully behind her fan.

"No, I never did want to," Graves said bluntly, "and unless I'm mistaken there is another woman who did either eh?" and he bent forward grinning.

The woman went pale beneath her rouge, and the fragile fan was shattered in the clutch of her long, slender fingers.

"You mean?" she asked sharply.

It had only been a suspicion with him until then, but she confirmed his opinion, and the broker returned tersely:

"Mean? Why, the only thing I could. I know why you hate Rose. She was not the only softer woman who fancied the handsome reporter, eh."

"I wish I could kill you," Mrs. Livingstone said quietly, but the flash in her eyes, now green, showed she was in earnest.

"I have no doubt that you would murder me out of hand if you were sure you would not be discovered, but let us be practical. I want you to help me."

Mrs. Livingstone said nothing, simply glaring at him like some caged tigress.

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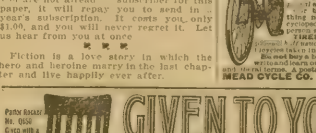

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READERS WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

It is no easy task to down an upright man

Schools for scandal are somewhat crowded.

A close friend is one who will loosen up occasionally

Dyspepsia sours a lot of the milk of human kindness.

A woman should never go out walking in a driving rain.

Struggling to get rich quick keeps many a man poor.

Some men succeed by ability and some rely on their nerve.

The faster a man's gait the sooner misfortune overtakes him.

Nothing ever takes such a hard fall out of worry as hard labor.

Much happiness or misery lies within the circle of a wedding ring.

The man who weds an old flame often finds that she has a red-hot temper.

We all have a soft spot in our heads at birth—and some always retain it.

Luck may be a good servant, but as a master his pay days are uncertain.

But, oh, when love's young dream develops into a matrimonial nightmare!

Beauty may be only skin deep, but the plump girl gets the most joy rides.

It is easier for a man to be the architect of his own fortune than to be the builder.

Women would soon tire of men if men were as good as the women think they should be.

Some men make fortunes out of old things and others starve while trying to invent new things.

A woman likes to have people say that she is looking young and is a member of an old family.

There is less wear and tear on a woman's mind than on a man's—probably because she changes it oftener.

An old bachelor says that the vocalization at a wedding is even more depressing than the singing at a funeral

A woman dislikes to find her first ass—but almost as badly as a man dislikes to part with his last one

Comparatively few people remain in the self-satisfied state after they once get acquainted with themselves.

When a man and woman argue the woman invariably gets the last word; but when two women argue it's always a draw.

It is said that in India a widow is burned with her late husband. In this country a widow takes another and roasts him.

Eck Lowrey's Luck

Or, In Quest of Douglas Beechmere

By I. M. Shepler

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CHAPTER XVII.

BACK STEP'S MASCOT.

BEFORE the boys were quite ready for their first long hunting trip, and were getting a tent, sleeping bags and other necessities ready, Back Step disappeared.

"He might have heard of a black fox somewhere he could get," hinted Don. "When I read him that article on how to trace them in with wire and care for them, he seemed interested."

"Or maybe steal it if he found one alive in some trapper's pit or other kind of trap. What get-rich-quick scheme is this that Indian is putting up on you boys?" asked Douglas Beechmere, who had overheard part of their conversation.

They explained. Douglas replied, his tone dubious:

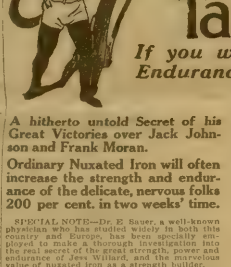
"The black and silver are really one and the same fox, and the hides are so valuable that they have just about disappeared from this region. The Indians, as well as white trappers and hunters, have hunted them so closely that a fox of that kind is a rare sight now, tho once in a while we run across one that is called the cross fox which is nearly as valuable. The fox you want is more plentiful up in the far Northwest land. And yet," he continued, "sometimes they come down from there. We will try to get word abroad that we will buy enough that are taken alive to start your fox farm with. Back Step will find a way for you to get a start, if he does not take some himself. Back Step is a mighty fox hunter. Did you ever notice that little back step he takes once in a while when he is on the trail? That's how he got his name."

By the time their patience was getting well exhausted, Back Step came briskly in one evening, then, slowly unbuttoning his fur coat, laid a bony, half-starved cub fox in the arms of each boy with the words:

"There a start."

"They were certainly the sure-for kind of a fox wanted," declared Douglas, examining both, "but mighty young for this time of year. Cub foxes usually come along in the summer. Where'd you get them, Back Step? This wasn't all of the litter, was it?"

"Didn't steal cubs," was the brief answer. "Old Chief Yankee Face trailed an old black fox so long, so long," holding up three or four fingers of his right hand. "Got her alive at last. Killed her. I saw pelt right off. Said there



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SPECIAL NOTE—Dr. E. Sauer, a well-known physician who has studied widely in both this country and Europe, has been specially employed to make a thorough investigation into the real secret of the great strength, power and endurance of Jess Willard, and the marvelous value of nuxated iron as a strength builder.

NEW YORK—Upon being interviewed at his apartment in the Colonial Hotel, Mr. Willard said: "Yes, I have a chemist with me to study the value of different foods and products as to their power to produce great strength and endurance, both of which are so necessary in the prize ring. As to recommending what I have often taken nuxated iron and I have particularly advocated the free use of iron by all those who wish to obtain great physical and mental power. Without it I am sure that I should never have been able to whip Jack Johnson so completely and easily as I did and while training for my fight with Frank Moran, I regularly took nuxated iron, and I am certain that it was a most important factor in my winning the fight so easily. Continuing, Mr. Willard said: "Mr. Willard's case is only one of hundreds which I could cite from my own personal experience where I have seen positively the astonishing power of nuxated iron to restore strength and vitality even in most complicated chronic conditions."

Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old, and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of 20 and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man—in fact, a young man who did not understanding his age. The secret he said was nuxated iron—nuxated iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health; at 46 careworn and nearly all in. Now at 50 a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. As I have said a hundred times over iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If you would only throw away patent medicines and secret concoctions and take simple nuxated iron, I am certain that the lives of thousands of persons might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, consumption, kidney, liver and heart trouble, etc. The real and true cause which started their diseases was nothing more or less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat your food merely pass s through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work, or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of run-down people who were ailing all the while, double their strength and endurance and entirely get rid of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by using iron in the proper form. And this after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated like nuxated iron if you want it to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

JESS WILLARD AT HOME

Among all the prominent figures of the prize ring, probably none is so devoted to family life as Jess Willard. After each engagement the champion hurries to his wife and children and remains at their side until public demand forces him to leave for new encounters. Everything is done to bring up the "little Willards" with strong healthy bodies. Mr. Willard accounts for his own success by saying—

"I consider that plenty of iron in my blood is the secret of my great strength, power and endurance."

Jess Willard

Many an athlete or prize fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray, while many another has gone to inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron.—E. Sauer, M. D.

Nuxated Iron, recommended above by Dr. Sauer, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by physicians in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron and increase their strength 200 per cent. or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

were cubs, young, some place. He say: 'Mebbe. No difference where. Cubs starved by this time.'"

"I go on hunt. Hunt long. Hunt wide in rocks. Then I hear them cry, cry. I found them. Two dead. These nearly."

"We can soon have them plump and saucy, can't we? Poor little cubs, you should not be so valuable, else you would have soon been out of your misery, wouldn't you? And Don pressed one miserable little thing to his face.

They left the fox cubs in the care of Joshua Beechmere when they started on the hunting trip.

Three weeks out, and no black fox in their traps as yet, tho they had taken some pelts of the red fox, and one of a cross, thanks to Back Step, who was something of a fox hunter. Then, one day, Back Step, stooping, dropped a bottle from his pocket—a common catsup bottle. The secretive manner with which he picked it up and hurriedly stuck it back in his pocket amused Don, who saw him.

"What's that corked up in that bottle?" he teased. "Give us a look at it."

"Why, you have enough Indian have one. Bring good luck to Indian. Found it way back, three, five moons. Been in there. Water washed it out on bank."

"Wonder if there's any Wa-ta-go sign connected with finding a bottle tight corked over a paper, in this land?" Don asked Eck.

"I think not. It's just a notion of Back Step's to make a mascot out of it. If it were down home that one picked up such a bottle I would think some fool boy or girl was playing a trick on somebody. Jim, when he was younger, was always flinging bottles containing wonderful messages in our creek," observed Eck; "but up here it must mean something."

"It would take one of his Wa-ta-go devils, or the big Chief Wa-ta-go, himself, to get that bottle. Let us open that bottle," was Don's reply.

Their chance came to examine the Indian's mascot, and the very way Don predicted.

One night, with the snow softly falling, but promising nothing as yet of one of those tremendous storms that sweep down upon the Saskatchewan, then across the lake and into the Northern States of the boy's own land, as they prepared supper in their comfortable tent, Back Step smoking contentedly over the fire, a wretched-visaged and miserably dressed man stumbled in, begging supper and shelter. He was badly cross-eyed and pockmarked. The boys noticed that Back Step, usually nonchalant and stolid, was excited as he hastened to hand over the greater part of his tobacco, and in doing so forced his eyes away from the ugly eyes of the man.

After a "hog's mess" of a supper, as Don termed it, the stranger rolled himself in a blanket and lay down by the fire.

On their skis the three had gone far that day, dragging the sled by hand. All slept soundly in their sleeping bags. When they awoke their guest was gone. Looking around, Don and Eck found not all of their coffee, most of their beans, and Eck's old silver watch.

"It was a trade," whispered Back Step. "They change into men. They eat and drink. Then they don't get what they ask you, then—great bad they do you. You disappear, like smoke. Never any one find you."

"Come away from such ideas, Back Step," ordered Don. "That was a real man. Maybe he was hungry. Glad I got a watch, Eck. Sorry about yours."

"No matter about mine. It was one I traded Back Step my hands of walnuts for. Never would keep time right unless you laid it on its face. Good riddance. Glad you got your eyes all nicely rattled about the time of day before night comes. He will never know when to go to bed or get up. Cry from Back Step give short this provoked observation.

The Indian was gazing out upon the snow surrounding the tent, a look of horror upon his face, and when Eck saw what caused the look, he nearly fell on Don in a hard fit of mirth. Their departed guest, before leaving, had walked round and round the tent; one could not get out of it from one side without walking over the tracks. Those who believe in the Wa-ta-go never cross a track supposedly made by him, for fear that they will be suddenly spirited away from the earth. They work every plan not to cross a strange line of tracks.

Eck and Don, with furtive glances at the worried Indian, would break into teasing laughter at the time they prepared breakfast. Back Step refused to eat. His case was serious. At last an idea darted into Eck's head. It was out as quick as in.

"Say, Back Step," he began, "if you could get over that track without walking over it, wouldn't that break the spell? If you had a tree or a balloon, to go up in? You could float over it in a balloon, you could bring out over it from the limb of a tree."

"No tree, no balloon," the Indian crafty answered.

"Well, would it do if either were handy?"

Back Step nodded his head in a manner indicating that it might.

"Then, I'll tell you. Let me read that letter in your pocket, and I'll carry you over the tracks on my back. I'm not afraid of any old Wa-ta-go. That fellow thought to all writing be, or he'd never have taken the trouble to walk all about the tent so often."

At first Back Step refused, then he gave in, and Eck was soon reading the

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE CAPTIVE WOMAN.

THE handwriting of the paper that Eck took from the bottle was womanly as well as scholarly. It read:

"The Indian village called Belden. I am a white woman. The only other white woman here was the wife of our missionary, Rev. Isaac Belden. She has been sick all summer. He took her down to Regina to see a surgeon. They were to have come back soon, else I would have gone with them. They have not come back according to promise, and I fear she is not able to come. Since he has gone one of the Indians called Soonfa, a cripple, a bad, rough man, has set himself up as chief, and is leading the older Indians back to their Indian spiritual belief. He says that I am prophesied to be his wife, and has sent foster brothers scared until they are on his side. Taking my little Indian foster sister, I have repeatedly tried to run away to the soldiers at the fort. Every time I am captured and brought back, and now am watched and guarded. Chance will throw this bottle in the river, and it may come into the hands of some white person, who must send the soldiers to take me away.

"ANALETHA ADRIAN."

"Back Step, you ought to be hung," exclaimed Eck, "packing this bottle around as a mascot all this time, and that poor girl, or woman, whichever she is, kept a prisoner by a dirty pack of Indians. That sounds some like the girl you told about Toodles and Indians."

"It is," and Back Step's jaw had fallen.

"Which is closest, the nearest fort, or this Indian village?" asked Don, beginning to throw their belongings together.

"Three days on skis to village," pointing straight west, "four to fort," pointing northwest.

"Well, we will go ourselves then. I have a big mind to let you ski in the midst of these tracks until the sun of next summer melts them off. But I promised you a way over them. Climb on my back."

Back Step, long and slim and not by many pounds as heavy as Eck, bounded astride his shoulders and rode, shivering, across those fateful cracks, while Don took the time to go over their trail three or four times and show Back Step he defied his Wa-ta-go.

Their destination varied going for the soldiers. He said the Belden village was remote, and seldom visited by white people, and that the nearest strong Indians and great ski leapers in it. "If they go wrong under Soonfa," he advised, "may take about notice for us."

The boys preferred to take their own way. They were becoming proficient on their skis, and were always in dragging the sled. Back Step having advised against the bringing of the pack ponies. They would ride, and seem hours sooner than Back Step had stated, came out on the heights below which was scattered the Indian village. Across the cut in these hills Back Step pointed toward two long, conifer-like cabins, some thirty rods apart. "One Letha's folks, other missionary's house," he told them.

On foot now, the skis strapped to their backs, they skirted the rise. Drawing near Letha's home, they saw a girl of about 12 come out and make her way to

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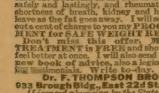

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a spring below. She stooped and began dipping water with a gourd.

Catching sight of the three, she dropped the gourd and came bounding up over the crusted snow like a fast-hopping rabbit, her long black plaits flying back of her uncovered head. She was a bright, sensible-looking little Indian girl.

"Waneeta," was the laconic remark of Back Step.

"Oh, have you come?" she asked, her eyes darting in turn to all. "You have come too late. She is very sick. The pain here," placing her hands on her breast. "Forget what the good man might call it."

"Pneumonia, I expect," suggested Don.

She nodded yes, then went on with: "Soonfa, the big, ugly Chief, watch about all the time, but he don't get in. He see my brothers, and they tell him how she is. She doctor herself 'til today, when something go wrong with her head. She not right." The child at this began to wring her little brown hands and make as if crying, tho no tears were in her eyes.

"Don't cry, honey," urged Eck, "and go and tell the Chief we are ambassadors from the missionary. We'll go in, but we got to pretend something, unless your being along will place us above suspicion." This last to Back Step. The Indian shook his head. He was not sure.

They went on and took possession of the missionary's house, and the big, ugly Soonfa, his crippled condition being solely due to having a club foot, soon made a visit to the missionary's house.

He was an ugly, brutal-looking fellow, and evidently not of this tribe at all, and could have had no power over it had the missionary not have left it to his mercy.

He had first come as a Medicine Man to some of the older people of the tribe, who never quite gave up a secret belief in their old Indian spirit legends. Despite Letha, as Back Step called her, his influence over these had been instant, and thru them he was dominating all of her adopted people.

That first night, looking at the ugly, suspicious face of Soonfa, the boys recognized how easily might the fate of all three end right here, and perhaps their world would never again hear of how they had gone or when.

"But not so long as Letha or Waneeta live to tell," Back Step hopefully hinted. "The white people severe on these Indians. They hang them when they find they do bad."

Late that night the little Indian girl came secretly to their barred door. Eck let her in. She was not crying but was shaking.

"They are going to kill my sister Letha," she whispered, under her breath. "Letha out of her mind. Soonfa and the elders came and looked at her and said she must die. I crawled under the floor. I heard. My brothers say 'no,' but Soonfa and the elders say it must be. That now if she live she live and come to herself to be a Wa-ta-go, an Indian devil. And she will do us, and all that come near her, dreadful harm. It is to be secret. My brothers are sworn not to tell. And I am not know of it. I don't believe in no Wa-ta-go. Oh, what will I do? If you folks ever shew any curiosity, or don't get away from here soon, you are to be killed. Soonfa think you spies."

Back Step, who was listening, merely grunted.

CHAPTER XIX.
TO LETHA'S RESCUE.

DON and Eck gazed each into the face of the other. They were at sea, without pilot or compass, it seemed. Each was studying a way out of this trouble. Back Step, too, was studying, tho he gave no sign of it. Waneeta sank down by the huge fireplace, a stolid picture of misery.

"You are not going back?" asked Eck.

The child had been well taught by her foster mother, for the mother who had adopted Letha was dead since not long after the birth of Waneeta. Letha had been both mother and sister to the child, whose father was also dead.

"No, they may kill me if I go now. When you go away, if you not save Letha from Soonfa, then I go with you. When the white man come here with Indian," pointing to Back Step, "to see missionary and his wife, he say he wish Letha and Waneeta come live in his nice house with him. That he be true brother to Waneeta." The little girl paused one moment, then finished: "Last thing Letha say that was right was she wished he had asked her that and not Waneeta. Letha kept Waneeta by her all the time. She carried a revolver and never let Soonfa get near her. She say if he touch her she kill him, then herself."

"Soonfa sent me out of the room. He put his big, fat aunt in there to watch Letha till they get ready to take her away. He say to my brothers, 'Get her out of sight.' He put guard around the house to walk all night. Big wild Joe Wahll, that Letha whisper to me after missionary and wife go, take his old grandfather and mother out one day and they not come back. He get all their home. Letha say that Soonfa teach them the old are better dead."

"How will you get away from the patrol around the house?" asked Eck, while Don slipped to one window of the room, and Back Step hung a shawl to it, and peeped across at the other house.

"I get from under the floor," Waneeta replied. "Soonfa scolding me when he call some more orders. I slipped along the hedge, and I got here some way not seen. Soonfa now hate Letha. He 'frald of her."

"He believes then fully what he is going to practice. He thinks she has become an evil spirit, and needs to die that others may be safe. How will she die?"

Waneeta looked steadily at Eck, and answered in the half whisper they were all now using.

"It is a religious ceremony. They take her away out, way off. Old women go along to shriek and sing and secure the evil ones away. The Medicine Man has a silk handkerchief. He knots it about the neck at the back. His big hands do the work. It is one twist of the handkerchief. That is all. Oh, Letha! Sister, sister!" She covered her face with her hands.

"Don't, Waneeta! They will only get her after we are dead. Not before," Eck whispered, and now Back Step was reaching for his gun.

Don came away from the window to whisper: "There is a big Indian patrolling about the house over there, and there is one out behind that big clump of low evergreen, keeping a watch on our door. We got four now, beside the old woman in there, to deal with."

"Back Step," Eck said in impressive voice, "you have been here before. Seems to me that the missionary made little headway with these people, if they would all backslide so soon. Are there any good braves down in that village that you can enlist to help us save Letha?"

"All the best gone hunting now. Gone for some days. None left but Soonfa's kind. No difference who hurt now. They, with my brothers, to save themselves if soldiers come, swear to all the lies Soonfa tell. Soonfa know where to get whisky for them. Soonfa set a big jug in with my brothers." Waneeta had answered for Back Step.

"Ah, maybe that simplifies matters," suggested Eck. "By this time Letha's brothers may be easily handled. Well, let's settle on what to do, for it must be done tonight. I think the three of us can certainly overpower three and the old woman. But the next thing is, where are we to find a fort where we can safely hold off Soonfa and his gang until Back Step skins off on his skis and brings the soldiers to the rescue, which should not be over three or four days, if so long. We never could protect Letha in that house over there. Waneeta, are there any caves not far? You see we dare not take Letha very far. In her condition, the moving out into the cold would kill her, and that would be out of the frying pan into the fire."

"Eck, you say three, you forget the fellow Soonfa has set to guard this house?" whispered Don.

"I fix him." Back Step arose with determination, holding his gun as he might a club.

"I know of a little cave not far back," Waneeta ventured, "just one way to get in and out. Not big at the mouth."

"Just the thing, then. We've got plenty of ammunition. If the cave is any good at all we can surely barricade it against any Indian or stray bullet getting in. Of course they might smoke us out."

Don, still investigating from his peephole, announced that the fellow watching the house they were in had sneaked out and over to the other house.

"Would that fog," observed Eck. "Hope it will hold him. Let's get ready to steal a march on that outside guard. We can, for surely by this time he guesses we are harmless and peacefully sheltering. Hide around somewhere, Waneeta, until we call you." But this Waneeta refused to do.

Silently the three stole out. Waneeta, carrying a hatchet, dodged back of them.

(Concluded Next Week.)

* * *

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"Now, the only thing remaining, Mr. Giltstock," he concluded, "is the drawing-room. Where shall we put the drawing-room?"

But Mr. Giltstock laid a firm hand on the desk.

"Look here, my boy, I draw the line somewhere. You've made plans for a smoking-room, when I don't smoke; a music-room, when I can't even play a mouth organ; a nursery, when I ain't got a nurse; and a pantry, when I don't paint. But I'm blamed if I'm going to let you put up a drawing-room, when I can't even draw a straight line!"

* * *

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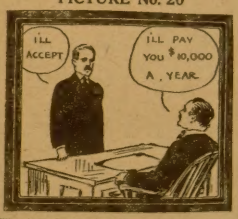

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